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**TEACHING, LEARNING, AND WRITING IN THE THIRD SPACE:
A STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE INTERSECTING
WITH INSTRUCTION**

by

Susan Toma-Berge

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
San Diego State University and the University of San Diego
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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December 2010

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by

Susan Toma-Berge

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all teachers of English learners: past, present, and future.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Teaching, Learning, and Writing in the Third Space: A Study of
Language and Culture Intersecting with Instruction

by

Susan Toma-Berge

Doctor of Education

San Diego State University and the University of San Diego, 2010

The purpose of this dissertation was to compare the characteristics and attributes of an effective first grade teacher of writing to English learners through the lens of the “third space.” The “third space” represents a place where sociocultural theory interacts with language and culture, and authentic, integrated literacy instruction. Because there is no empirical evidence to support the theory of the “third space” the observation and interview data were analyzed using literature that draws on three areas of study: English learners, first grade literacy, and urban schools.

The key findings from this study produced three themes that came about by the frequency and consistency in which they were observed in our first grade teacher, then by combining shared attributes from the literature to reveal three broader themes of effective teaching characteristics: Theme 1—Opportunities to learn: High expectations of the teacher and students; Theme 2—Reaching the goal: Scaffolding and monitoring students; and Theme 3—The right answer: Errors corrected by the teacher and student. The analysis also revealed a fourth significant finding. It revealed that every teacher is influenced by multiple factors ranging from grade level to linguistic diversity in the classroom. It may not be adequate to evaluate or assess teachers using a one-dimensional approach. Instead, more accurate information may be revealed if teachers are assessed and informed using multiple observation frameworks from the many areas of study that influence a classroom, much like the theory of the “third space” itself.

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I have also been fortunate to be part of a cohesive cohort. For the last six years we learned, laughed, and even cried. It has been an incredible journey and I am proud to have worked with some of the finest in education. Among this cohort is a very special group, my carpool group, which eventually became my retreat group. I could not have completed this dissertation alone and they were always there to cheer me on, in person and online.

The doctoral journey is a long and tedious one but I have been graced with family and friends, especially my parents, who have granted me forgiveness on my lack of presence, both physically and emotionally, during many milestone moments. Their continued patience helped me continue moving forward.

And my most heartfelt gratitude goes to my husband Eric, and my daughters Taryn and Nora. They sacrificed much on this journey, spending many weekends without me so I could write in solitude. Now that we have completed this dissertation as a family, I am eager to spend more time on my daughters' education. I hope they love school as much as I do.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

During the initial planning stages of this dissertation, my goal was to design a study that would answer the broad question, “What is the most effective way to teach English learners to write?” The very nature of this question implied that there was a formula or a set of instructions that would allow anyone to effectively teach writing to all English learners. Instead of looking for this elusive formula, I decided to look to classroom teachers for possible answers. What are classroom teachers already doing to support English learners with writing? Could the answer to my broad question be found by interviewing and observing classroom teachers who were considered successful at teaching writing to English learners? The intent of this study changed from looking for a set of instructions to generating a theory based on the actions and beliefs of classroom teachers as well as providing a descriptive analysis of student writing from one of these teachers.

I chose to focus on English learners and writing because teaching writing can be challenging and teachers of English learners may find it even more so. Recent scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2006) reported lower scores for English learners than English proficient students on *The Nation’s Report Card: Writing 2006*. According to the 2006 report, the average scale score for all students was 155.99 but the average scale score for English language learners (ELL) was only 120.46. That means that

only 58.41% of all 8th grade students who are ELL scored at or above basic on this assessment while 84.38% of all 8th grade students scored at or above basic. These scores show a large discrepancy between the writing achievement of English learners and the writing achievement of all students.

Many urban school districts enroll a large percentage of English learners as well as a growing variety of languages spoken among these students. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), which enrolls the largest number of English learners in the nation (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2006-2007), classifies 41% of the total student population as English learners with 91 primary languages spoken (LAUSD, 2006). Several studies suggest that primary language instruction is the most effective way to teach English learners both academic content and English language acquisition (de la luz Reyes, 1992; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005), allowing these students to transfer primary language literacy skills to English literacy skills (Cummins, 1981), but there are not enough qualified teachers to meet these growing demands (Guha et al., 2006). It would be difficult, if not impossible for any school district to meet the primary language demands of students who speak 91 different languages. There is also the obstacle of public opinion and legislation.

Primary language instruction is limited in many states due to legislation such as Proposition 227 which passed by popular vote in California in 1998. Proposition 227 required that “all public school instruction be conducted in English” unless parents sign waivers allowing their children to participate in a primary language instructional program. This legislation drastically changed the way English learners received instruction. Instead of acquiring literacy skills in their primary language then transferring these skills while

acquiring English language proficiency, many of these students were enrolled in English immersion classes called “Structured English Immersion” or SEI.

English immersion would seem to be the most equitable way to educate all students, especially English learners, since it would be near impossible to find well-trained teachers who are proficient in all the languages that are spoken within the boundaries of any one school district, let alone a large urban school district like the LAUSD where 91 languages are spoken. School districts that have students with many different home languages would be able to serve their language acquisition needs without seeking teachers with proficiency in these home languages. The widespread implementation of English immersion across the state concerned me because I wanted to ensure that all English learners were offered access to the curriculum in a comprehensible manner. This concern has guided my research interests and areas for study.

This dissertation represents a follow-up to an earlier pilot study. In the pilot study I asked two school site administrators, both with experience as classroom teachers and literacy coaches, to recommend teachers who have been successful at teaching writing to English learners. They recommended four teachers to participate in this study and I was able to observe and interview them. I used narrative inquiry to analyze both the interviews and observations. Narrative inquiry is the qualitative approach to “the study of experience as story” and a “view of a phenomenon” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477). By interviewing teachers and allowing them to tell their story, to talk about their experience teaching writing to English learners, I was able to find out what attributes they had in common.

I observed each teacher for 3 full days, noting any classroom instruction related to writing even during periods outside the regular language arts block. I took detailed field notes

over the course of the observations and included notes on classroom environment, student behavior, and classroom discourse. The common attributes I found among these teachers during the observations were the use of public error correction, sharing of their personal lives with their students, cultural understanding of the students' backgrounds, and the development of background knowledge and content vocabulary. I uncovered frequent use of error correction of students' oral errors. Students who mispronounced a word, used slang, or made a grammatical error were told the correct way to say it. The students who were publicly corrected never seemed to shut down after the correction. Instead, they repeated the corrected word or phrase and continued with their conversation. The teachers in this study also shared, to varying degrees, their personal lives with their students. The students knew about the teachers' home life, family, aspirations, and likes and dislikes. Another common attribute was the teachers' understanding and sensitivity to the students' backgrounds. All the teachers in this study were very familiar with their students' families and often taught older siblings in past years. Parents felt comfortable talking to these teachers. The teachers often knew about resources in the community and frequently referred their students and their parents to these community resources.

These four teachers were recommended for this study based on their success at teaching writing to English learners, but analysis of observation field notes and interviews revealed that they shared another trait. Each teacher understood their students' lives beyond school. They appreciated the languages spoken at their students' home and in the community. Each of these four teachers exhibited behaviors that could be described by sociocultural theory. Sociocultural theory is the belief that activity is affected by the environment (Prior, 2005) and cultural factors (Lantolf, 2006). It is based on Vygotsky's theory that activity is

mediated based on cultural factors such as activities, artifacts and concepts (Lantolf, 2006). In the context of English learners, Goldenberg, Rueda, and August (2006) state that these factors “make up the broad social context in which children and youth live and go to school” (p. 250). They make the case that teachers who are able to bridge the differences these students experience at home with school can enhance classroom instruction.

These initial findings led me to a different place, the “third space.” The third space, a theoretical view of literacy introduced by Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Turner (1997), represents a place where curriculum intersects with language and culture. Teaching in the third space, much like the teachers in my original study, requires knowledge of and sensitivity to students’ language, experiences and culture—their sociocultural context—while providing access to authentic, integrated literacy development. Gutierrez et al. (1997) compare the idea of the third space to the “radical middle” proposed by David Pearson in his 1996 argument against the overwhelming support in favor of whole language movement by literacy professionals over phonics instruction. Instead, Pearson argues in favor of the integration of authentic literacy instruction while teaching literacy skills, such as explicit phonics instruction. While this argument is now over 13 years old and whole language is no longer the dominant mode of literacy instruction, it remains relevant today. Instead of the focus on whole language, however, a similar argument can be made about the ubiquity of scripted programs, as mentioned in his article, “The Reading Wars” (Pearson, 2004). The third space is the intersection between sociocultural theory and the radical middle—the space where teaching and learning take place with full knowledge of and sensitivity to students’ interaction with language and culture, both inside and outside school (see Figure 1).

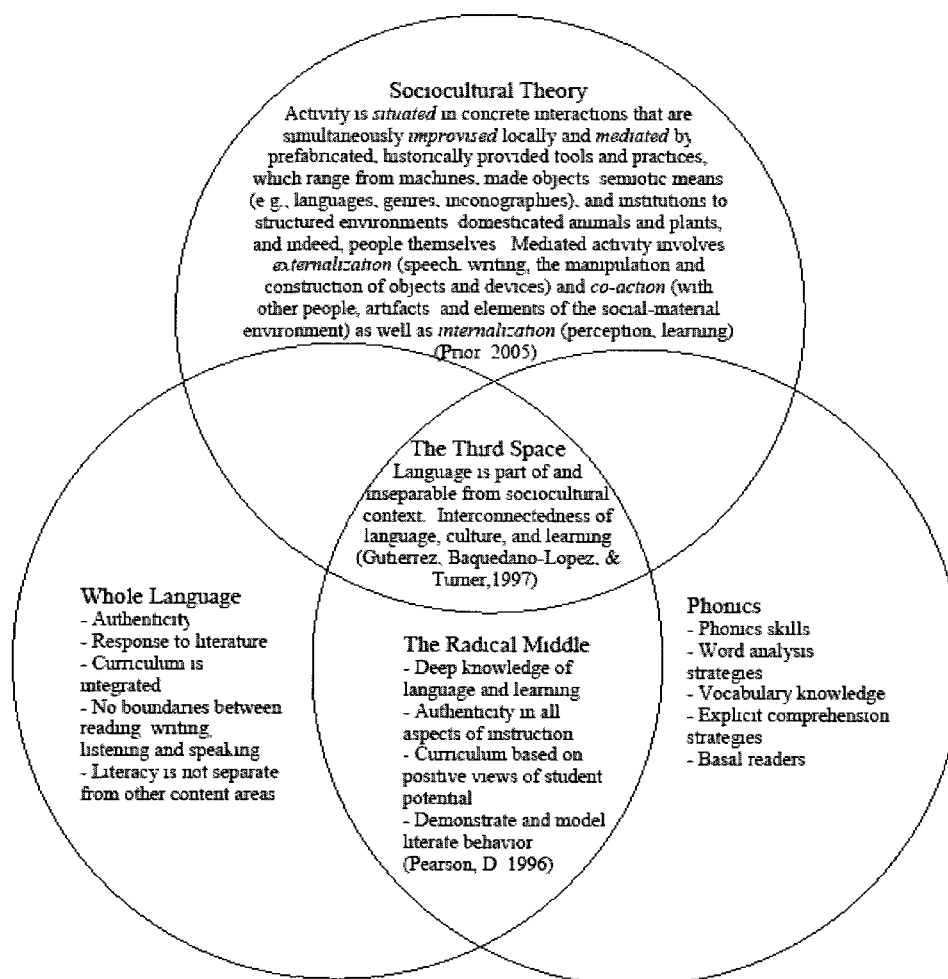


Figure 1. The third space.

My orienting theory is based on this hybrid of the third space. The third space is where sociocultural theory interacts with the radical middle—where interactions with language and culture intersect with authentic, integrated literacy instruction. This new orientation has prompted me to reanalyze my data through this new lens of the third space. In the context of this dissertation, the third space represents a different way at looking at how we teach English learners, especially in regards to writing instruction. In addition to the foundations of language acquisition theory, where discussions of low affective filters, comprehensible input, and SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English) take place, the third space includes the elements of effective teaching, explicit skills instruction balanced with whole language experiences combined with an appreciation of students' language and culture, nestled in the context of effective writing instruction. It is from this vantage point that I will explore and analyze the data, which was collected from first grade teachers, who upon initial analysis in my previous study, showed hints of moving within this third space. Through this study, I hope to reveal how teaching while cognizant of the factors that affect English learners in urban schools, may lead to effective writing performance. The analysis of the writing samples will also, to a degree, serve to validate the “accuracy” of the selection of the original four teachers in the study who were nominated as being successful teachers of writing to English learners.

I will re-examine my observation and interview data using research-based evidence that exists within the areas of study in the third space. In addition to looking at writing instruction, the same observation field notes and interview notes will be analyzed through the lens of the third space: the intersection of sociocultural theory and integrated authentic literacy instruction.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The conceptual framework for this study draws on three areas of literature framed within sociocultural theory and the third space: second-language writing attributes of effective teachers, and first grade literacy. I was able to draw from these bodies of research in order to form the foundation for my research question:

Will the attributes of a successful teacher of writing to first grade English learners match the attributes of “effective” and “exemplary” teachers found in previous studies of English learners, second language writing and first-grade students?

The findings from this study have implications for novice teacher education and professional development for practicing teachers who are responsible for educating English learners and/or the teaching of writing. Can the attributes of these effective teachers of writing to English learners be shared with new teachers?

POSITIONALITY

On a personal level, I stand to gain from the outcomes of this study, by learning from other teachers. As a former elementary school teacher of English learners in a large urban school, I recall the frustrations of my students as they struggled to learn content while learning to speak English at the same time. My goal became finding ways to better my teaching while improving the learning experience of my students. My own road to becoming a teacher meandered through the Reading Wars, as well as through the debate on primary-language instruction. My teacher preparation program introduced me to creating authentic literacy experiences for my students using good literature but it wasn't until I was firmly planted in the classroom that I realized the need for explicit skills and phonics instruction.

These I learned through professional development workshops when the literacy pendulum swung back in that direction. I also trained to become a Reading Recovery teacher so I could provide intensive support to struggling, at-risk first grade students, as well as my own classroom of students. It was through the Reading Recovery training that I experienced, for the first time, the emphasis placed on explicit skills instruction in the context of authentic, whole language literacy experiences.

I also made a commitment to earn a bilingual credential in Spanish in order to support my students in their primary language and communicate more effectively with their parents. As a non-native Spanish speaker, the journey was challenging, but I eventually earned my bilingual credential in 1998, only to have Proposition 227 pass that same year. Suddenly, there was little need for me to use Spanish for instruction. Instead, it became critical that I provide a safe environment for English immersion. I had to be able to teach students the content they required while acquiring the English language.

My experience in education was useful in analyzing the observation and interview data and finding the common attributes of the teachers from the original pilot study, but I admit, there is the potential for personal bias. I still strongly believe that English learners benefit from primary language instruction, and I see that as a benefit whenever a teacher uses it to help their students to understand content. At the same time, I also agree that specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) is also beneficial for English learners in order to learn content. I also developed a personal connection to the teachers that were involved with my original pilot study. As happens often with narrative inquiry, I came to truly admire and respect my teachers, and almost felt a duty to “protect” them in my analysis. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) caution researchers about this possibility when they say, “. . .

researchers, perhaps more aware of how texts may ultimately be read, may find themselves being more cautious about how participants are represented than the participants themselves” (p. 177). I plan to bracket my own bias for this study by re-examining the data using empirical instruments from research that took place in these areas of study.

I now work with pre-service teachers in a credential program and I am still searching for ways to improve the educational experience of all students, but especially English learners. How can I better prepare future teachers to create the most conducive educational environment for English learners? How will they be able to support their students to becoming proficient writers? I want my pre-service teachers to know that there is no fool-proof formula or set of instructions on how to plan instruction. I want them to know that many factors contribute to being an “effective,” “successful,” or “exemplary” teacher. I am counting on the findings of this study to lead me closer to finding out what will make the greatest contribution to the educational experience of English learners. My students and all future teachers need to understand that there will always be political and rhetorical battles in education. They must seek their own “radical middle” between the academic extremes and their own “third space” where their ideologies and philosophy of teaching intersect with thoughtful instruction. My ultimate goal, not just of this dissertation, but my role in teacher education, is to be able to guide future teachers to reaching this space.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

While there are not any studies that specifically document the efficacy of the third space, studies do exist that demonstrate the efficacy of the areas that encompass the third space: language and culture, and explicit skills instruction integrated with authentic, whole language experiences. The following literature review will encompass the areas of study that make up the third space. Much literature exists on the benefits of integrating these aspects of sociocultural theory and balanced literacy instruction but how do they affect English learners, specifically those in the first grade?

In order to investigate my research question, I am drawing on three strands of literature: the literature on teaching writing to English learners, literature on the attributes of effective teachers, and the literature on primary grade literacy development

How will the attributes of a successful teacher of writing to first grade English learners match the attributes of “effective” and “exemplary” teachers found in previous studies of English learners, second language writing and first-grade students?

SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY AND THE “THIRD SPACE”

Sociocultural theory draws on the research and writings of Lev Vygotsky (1986) on how people learn. The basic tenet of sociocultural theory is that human activity is mediated (Lantolf, 1994). Mediation is the change that takes place cognitively when a person is introduced to both social and cultural “tools” such as language, adults, family, school

(Lantolf, 2000; Prior, 2005). When young children interact with their social and cultural surroundings it affects their learning and development (Prior, 2005). Tharp and Gallimore wrote about Vygotsky in their book, *Rousing Minds to Life* (1988) asserting that,

a child's development cannot be understood by a study of the individual. We must also examine the external social world in which that individual life has developed Through participation in activities that require cognitive and communicative functions, children are drawn into the use of these functions in ways that nurture and "scaffold" them. (pp. 6-7)

Every interaction children have with the social and cultural world effects learning.

According to sociocultural theory, three cultural factors influence learning: activities, artifacts, and concepts (Lantolf, 2006). Wertsch (1991) refers to these artifacts as "cultural tools" that shape social and individual behavior. Activities include play, education, and work. When a child plays with others, she learns from the behaviors of others, the environment, and the tools (or toys) used, and this affects her learning and development. Artifacts include both the physical and symbolic tools used in society and culture. The physical tools can be books, utensils, clocks, and weapons while the symbolic tools can be language, number systems, art, and music. Concepts are the rules, understandings, and theories constructed by communities to connect to the physical and symbolic (Lantolf, 1994). Vygotsky was able to determine that children will take on a "markedly different, and culturally influenced, character" upon interacting with these cultural factors (as cited in Lantolf, 1994, p. 418) when he observed children. In one observation of two children, both 7 years old, he noticed that they were both equally capable of solving problems of similar difficulty. When an adult interacted with one of the children by asking questions and providing examples, the child was able to solve tasks that were considered much more difficult as opposed to the child who did not receive this mediation (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992).

In the school environment, or more specifically the classroom, the social context and cultural factors often differ from the familiar home environment (Goldenberg et al., 2006). August and Shanahan (2006) in their review of research on literacy and English learners, state that although “there is surprisingly little evidence for the impact of sociocultural variables on literacy achievement or development” it does not negate the importance of these factors (p. 7). Instead, August and Shanahan fault shortcomings in the research such as studies that are descriptive rather than linking to student outcomes. They make the claim that teachers who are able to bridge the differences these students experience at home with the vast difference they experience at school can enhance classroom instruction (p. 251). One reason is that language-minority students, or English learners, are not only in school to acquire the English language, but to acquire a second culture. Teachers often are the bridge between these two cultures: home and school.

Sociocultural theory applies to writing because a writer interacts with socially constructed artifacts and concepts. Tools such as paper, pens, computers, etc., are used to explain, describe, record, or share the concepts that are constructed by the sociocultural world. (Prior, 2005). The writer uses the act of writing to externalize, produce, based on this mediated activity with cultural artifacts, such as knowledge from the teacher and texts. Teachers often play a role in students’ writing, since they often select the topic and the purpose for the writing, thus encouraging the mediation. The teacher is the primary, and oftentimes sole, audience for much of the student writing.

SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY + RADICAL MIDDLE INSPIRES THE THIRD SPACE

The “radical middle” is a term created by David Pearson in his 1996 article, “Reclaiming the Center: The Search for Common Ground in Teaching Reading,” arguing for the end to the battle for educational prominence between phonics-based curriculum and whole language based curriculum. Pearson, tired of the ongoing debate and the imposition of whole language by literacy professionals—to the near extinction of literacy skills instruction favored by the public—instead, argued in favor of looking to the radical middle where both instructional approaches to literacy are used with an understanding of language and learning while attending to the authentic application of literacy skills. He considered this to be a radical step since he believed no one was speaking on behalf of those who wanted to stay out of the debate. Pearson appreciated aspects of whole language instruction, such as the emphasis on authentic literacy tasks and the use of literature, but he was troubled by the seemingly single-minded focus by literacy organizations such as the International Reading Association to champion whole language to the detriment, and in some cases, total elimination of explicit skills instruction (Pearson, 2004).

Attributes of teachers who reside in this radical middle will teach phonics in the context of reading or writing, but also recognize the need for explicit skills instruction. As an example, he suggested taking phonics instruction out of workbooks and into real reading and writing activities. Phonics is considered a “means to an end” in order for students to break the code for reading. Teachers model literate behaviors for their students, but explicitly scaffold the demonstration so students can clearly identify the literacy skill being demonstrated, instead of letting students passively observe the behavior.

The radical middle inspired the concept of the “third space.” Gutierrez et al. (1997) saw the radical middle not as a compromise, but “a place where two scripts or two normative patterns of interaction intersect, creating the potential for authentic interaction and learning to occur” (p. 372). They saw it as a shift in pedagogical perspective placing the emphasis on learning, rather than on teaching. The third space represents the intersection of ideas from both sociocultural theory and the radical middle with an emphasis on English learners. The third space represents the blending of language and literacy learning with sociocultural influences. By combining elements of sociocultural theory—the social context, social influences, mediated activity through interaction with societal artifacts—with the radical middle of literacy instruction, the focus is now on instruction that is geared specifically to the students’ needs. Teachers take on a situated view of literacy learning in favor of the “one size fits all” approach.

LEARNING IN THE THIRD SPACE

Many of the concepts from the third space can be found in literature about teaching and learning. For instance, there is often a stark contrast between the culture of the classroom and the culture of the students (Goldberg et al., 2006). This contrast is most noticeable in urban schools which often enroll large numbers of English learners. According to the National Education Association (2003), 90% of all teachers are white and middle class. The third space is where the dichotomy between the culture of the classroom and the culture of the community blend together due to the teacher’s awareness of the differences. Teachers in the third space recognize these differences and make efforts to guide students through this cultural maze, giving them the tools navigate through the unfamiliar cultural landscape. Lisa

Delpit (1988) calls this giving students the tools to succeed in the “culture of power” and asserts that students are not in a position of power in the classroom. She states that African-American students are especially vulnerable to this position because they tend to lack the “cultural capital” that some students, primarily middle class white students, come to school already with an idea of how to navigate this culture of power. “Cultural capital” is defined as social, cultural, and intellectual knowledge passed down to children from their middle class parents (Bourdieu, 2001). Teachers need to first recognize that they are in the position of power in the classroom, and that they need to explicitly teach students the codes and rules for participating in the culture of power, thus providing them with cultural capital. One of the “codes” she writes about is the learning to decipher the literacy code. Much like the argument made by Pearson (1996), she asserts that students who do not have cultural capital often need both explicit skills instruction in combination with authentic literacy experiences in order to match the knowledge already gained by other students, thereby cracking the literacy code.

Delpit (1988) argues that “the rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power” (p. 282) so a “one size fits all” approach to literacy will not work with all students since they have different backgrounds and experiences. Maria de la luz Reyes (1992) also wrote about the pitfalls of this “one size fits all” approach to literacy in her article about challenging assumptions about teaching English learners. This argument was made specifically against the popular use of whole language and process writing as the primary means of literacy instruction. She suggests that while this approach to literacy learning may work for students who are in the cultural and linguistic majority, it may not work for the students who are in the cultural and linguistic minority without a proper

introduction to how to function in this unstructured environment. These are among the many challenges English learners face in the cultural environment of their classroom.

In the next two sections, I will cover areas that encompass areas of study within the third space. Since the third space is the intersection of socialcultural theory—which includes language and culture—and the radical middle—the integrations of skills based instruction with authentic, whole language literacy instruction—the studies mentioned will cover these areas. The first focus will be on English learners and second language writing. The studies that will be covered in that section will show strategies that have been proven effective through research. Studies on writing research, second language writing, and more specifically, on children's second language writing were analyzed. The next area of focus will be on teacher attributes and first grade literacy. In this section, I analyzed the literature on effective teachers of English learners, effective teachers of first grade literacy, and effective teachers of urban schools.

ENGLISH LEARNERS AND SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING

August and Shanahan found, in their 2006 meta-analysis, that, while research on acquiring literacy in a second language remains limited, several findings emerged. One of their findings is that English learners who develop greater oral proficiency in English have a greater chance of developing proficiency in text-level skills such as comprehension and writing. The next section will cover the history of writing research, second language writing, and the challenges of second language writing among young children. Most English learners face the same difficulties with writing as primary English speakers do. They both struggle with the task of using the conventions of written English as well as choosing the elements

that go into a piece of writing (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997). One difference between English learners and primary English speakers in regards to writing is language proficiency (Krashen, 1982). The next section will cover in detail the research surrounding writing research, second language writing and children's second language writing.

Writing Research

One of the first major groundbreaking studies in the area of writing research was by Janet Emig in 1971 on the composing processes of eight 12th grade students. The students were observed while writing and their think-aloud protocols were recorded. This study was groundbreaking in that it launched the beginning of empirical research on writing in North America (Nystrand, 2006). Other studies followed and George Hillocks published his meta-analysis of 20 years of research on writing, composing processes, and teaching methods (Hillocks, 1987). Among the findings was the effectiveness of the instructional use of inquiry in writing. Inquiry is defined as the process of presenting students with a problem and or task and allowing them to solve it by analyzing data.

The Hillocks meta-analysis covered writing research that was published between 1963 and 1982. Other meta-analysis came along to cover the writing research that was published in the mid-1980s (Durst, 1990) and between 1999 and 2004 (Juzwik et al., 2006). The later meta-analysis included over 1,502 articles on writing research. A trend uncovered by this meta-analysis is that although research is taking place on bilingual and multicultural writing, very little of this research is taking place at the P-12 levels. This next section will cover research on writing by English learners, both adult and young students.

Second Language Writing

Learning to write benefits English learners because writing is the concrete manifestation of thoughts, ideas, reflections, and analysis. When English learners see their own ideas on paper they see a concrete representation of the structure of the English language and teachers see a window into their understanding (Krashen & Lee, 2005). Clay (1991) noticed, while observing 100 children weekly during their first year of school, that writing development can be slowed down so English learners have the opportunity to take their time and gain control of literacy concepts through practice and revision. This is not always possible during oral language when an immediate response is expected. The slower pace of producing written language presents an opportunity for students to experiment with new concepts without the fear of making a public error. Through her many observation of English learners in high schools, Harklau (2002) noticed that many English learners, if given a choice, are more likely pay more attention to text, than to oral language for the same reason. Part of the reason for that was because they were intimidated to use English in front of others. The other reason, she noticed, was that the one English expert in the classroom, the teacher, did not have the time to dialogue directly in English with all the students in the classroom. Text and written information are available for review as a proper model of the English language when a willing fluent English speaker may not be available. Writing is not a replacement for oral language development in English language acquisition, but rather, another form of communication.

Much like the arguments made by Pearson (1996), Delpit (1988), and de la luz Reyes (1992), regarding giving students the tools to navigate literacy learning, evidence exists that explicitly teaching cognitive skills can be beneficial, especially for English learners. One

such study involving students in both middle and high schools in a large urban school district, found that explicitly teaching cognitive literacy skills such as asking questions, clarifying, planning, and making predictions, middle school and high school students, especially English learners, received higher scores on school-wide writing assessments and standardized tests, than the control group classrooms with traditional English/language arts instruction where these cognitive strategies were not necessarily explicitly taught (Olson & Land, 2007). This finding is supported by reports from the National Research Council that effective schools for English learners provide a balance of explicit skills with more authentic, whole language literacy experiences (August & Hakuta, 1997).

Planning, one of the cognitive skills that was included as one of the explicit cognitive literacy skills instruction in the Olson and Land (2007) study, was found to be a critical element in another study of L2 writing. Planning was defined as a “critical high level composing activity” (Manchon & Roca de Larios, 2007, p. 549) consisting of creating outlines and revising them while writing to create new plans. Adult and adolescent L2 writers were observed while writing and the study found that students with a higher level of proficiency in their primary language spent more time on planning when writing in both their L1 and L2. L2 writers with lower proficiency in their own primary language spent little to no time planning before their writing.

Another effective strategy for supporting English learners with L2 writing has been the use of specific feedback or error correction. In a study of 15 adult ESL university students, students were observed during a 3-day sequence that took place over 3 weeks. On the first day, the students wrote a description of a picture for 30 minutes. The following day, one group was given feedback in the form of error corrections, while the other groups were

given feedback in the form of a “reformulation” by a native English speaker. The Native English speaker rewrote the student’s description and made all the necessary corrections but did not make these corrections explicit. On the third day, the student rewrote the original description without any access to either the error corrections or the reformulation. The most effective form of feedback was the error corrections. The students made the most changes in linguistic accuracy when they were given error corrections. They corrected 96.4% of their original errors when given specific feedback and error corrections, compared to the group that only corrected 81.4% of their original errors when given a reformulation (Sachs & Polio, 2007). The findings from this study suggest that English learners benefit from explicit correction of errors, even though traditional theories of language acquisition have suggested otherwise. Krashen (1982) claims that error corrections will raise a learner’s “affective filter”—their motivation, self-confidence and anxiety related to language acquisition, and put the student on the “defensive.”

This concept of specific error corrections mirrors the sentiments of Delpit (1988), in her discussion of giving students the codes to the culture of power, as well as de la Cruz Reyes (1992), in her discussion of challenging assumptions long held about teaching English learners. Delpit (1998) claims that it is the teacher’s responsibility to share this knowledge, to correct a student’s error, in order to share the code, a literacy code, for participating in culture of power. Some teachers see this as disempowering the student, but another of Delpit’s assertions is that those in power need to acknowledge it and learn how to share the rules and codes. This follows along with Vygotsky (1986) and his theory that activity is mediated when interacting with artifacts of society—in this case, the teacher, language, and the error. Students need to learn from experts in order to advance to the next level of development. De

la luz Reyes (1992) also makes this same argument in the context of teaching English learners. She argues that it is the teacher's responsibility to explicitly correct students' errors in English. She claims that students, especially English learners, want to know how to say things correctly and will not comprehend the "modeling of a proper response" that is often the strategy used by teachers of English learners in order to maintain a "low affective filter" (Krashen, 2003). Instead, if the students hear the response but not an explicit correction, they will assume there are no errors.

Another study on second-language writing suggests another way teachers could lessen the impact of "culture clash" between the classroom and the culture of the students (Goldenberg et al., 2006). In this qualitative study, an adult English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) student in China was paired up with two native-English speakers in the United States for support in passing the TOEFL exam, a test of English language proficiency required of many foreign students before being admitted to an university in the United States. The EFL student sent her writing to the two native-English speakers for feedback on her writing.

What they discovered was that the Chinese student wrote in English, but used many of the linguistic patterns that occur in Chinese. For example, verbs are not conjugated in Chinese. Instead, context clues serve the same purpose as verb conjugations. Nouns are also not pluralized. These were found in the Chinese student's writing of English. The pre-service teachers gave feedback to the student about how these writing/speaking conventions should look in English.

The authors also learned that the Chinese student was better able to write essays that focused more on her prior knowledge, such as a comparison and contrast of public

transportation in China versus the United States. When the same student was asked to write an essay about Disneyland, she had a more difficult time since it was not part of her experience. So if teachers of English learners were familiar with the linguistic patterns of their students' primary language, they would be able to anticipate error patterns in writing and prepare instruction appropriately. In the third space, language, culture and learning are interconnected (Gutierrez et al., 1997).

Children's Second Language Writing

The literature for second language writing, or L2 writing, primarily consists of studies on adults who have high levels of literacy development in their primary language (L1). This high level of literacy fluency in their primary language tends to make learning a second, or foreign language easier, because basic skills do not need to be relearned, although studies of young students who have been successful with cross-linguistic transfer are available (Cárdenas-Hagan, Carlson, & Pollard-Durodola, 2007). This is usually not the situation for many young students enrolled in public elementary schools and immersed in English. For many of these students, they are learning English while learning to write in English.

Many of these students face not only the obstacle of language acquisition, but of teacher perception and low expectations. In a dissertation by Anita Hernandez (1999), student writing samples were analyzed using several scales for ideas, organization, sentence complexity, and spelling to determine which writers were "weak" and which were considered "strong." Among these four fifth grade students, one was a native English speaker and considered a "strong writer" by the teacher. Among the remaining three students, only one was considered a "strong writer" by the teacher while the other two students were considered

“weak.” The teachers had voluntarily not received the specialized training given to teachers of linguistically diverse students.

The author analyzed all four writing samples and found that all the writers included a similar number of details in their writing and they all started with an introduction and ended with a conclusion. The only difference the author found in the writing samples was spelling errors. The “weak” writers made more spelling errors than the “strong” writers according to their classroom teacher. The author concludes that teachers who are not looking beyond the mechanics of writing, and only focus on one aspect of writing—spelling—may incorrectly label their students’ writing proficiency based on one attribute of their writing. The author suggests that students’ writing proficiency could be more accurately assessed by relying on multiple criteria.

In a study conducted by Maguire and Graves (2001), the authors followed three non-English speaking Muslim girls over a 4-year period, from the first to third grade while they attended an English speaking school in Canada. The authors analyzed 314 journal entries from these girls over the 3 years to look for how they revealed their “speaking personalities” in writing. By “speaking personalities” they were looking for the students’ “voice” through their content, syntax, and rhetorical structures. By analyzing the students’ journal writing, the authors were able to determine that the students, given a choice, wrote about identity and self. The journals showed that the girls most frequently wrote about themselves and their school. They also wrote about their difficulty adjusting to Canadian life and how it compared to their past. Each of these girls showed that they improved in their control of sentence structure in English as well as their use of punctuation. The authors of this study suggest that these girls were able to make such progress in their writing because their teachers valued their linguistic

background and experiences and because they were able to write about a topic that was important to them. The authors suggest that teachers who “better understand the sociocultural contexts” (p. 587) of their students and allow them to write about what they know, may help English learners to improve their writing.

TEACHER ATTRIBUTES

While research exists in the area of second language writing, there is a dearth of empirical literature available on second language writing in the elementary grades. For this reason, I have chosen to analyze the texts of elementary age English learners, specifically students in the first grade. I selected the first grade because there is a long history of literacy research that takes place with first grade students, but very little that look at English learners in the first grade. I also chose to review the literature about attributes of teachers of writing, teachers of English learners, and teachers at urban schools. These areas of study will combine to allow me to create an observation framework that mirrors the attributes of teachers in the third space. This next section will cover the topics of teacher attributes and first grade literacy. The studies that were analyzed in this section give insight into what makes an effective teacher. The teachers were observed, interviewed, surveyed, and linked to student work.

First Grade Literacy

One of the first studies published about first grade literacy was the “first grade studies” by Bond and Dykstra in 1967 (as cited in Bond & Dykstra, 1997). In this study, they determined that children learn to read by using a combination of approaches, as opposed to a “one size fits all” approach to literacy and that “No one method of instruction would uniquely

overcome the limitations imposed on children” (as cited in Bond & Dykstra, 1997, p. 118). A controversial finding from this study, however, was that the teacher did not have an effect on student achievement of literacy skills. Since then, there have been multiple studies that dispute this finding.

At least two studies looked at the attributes and characteristics of first grade teachers and literacy instruction. One study followed five teachers who were nominated by literacy coaches as being “exemplary” at teaching literacy. These five exemplary teachers were compared with four teachers that were considered “typical” at teaching literacy. These teachers were all observed and interviewed to determine the common traits among the “exemplary” group of teachers. The study identified that the exemplary teachers offered instructional balance while teaching literacy skills (Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampton, 1998) with a thorough integration of reading and writing activities. The concept of “instructional balance” is similar to the suggestion made by Pearson (1996) in his argument for the radical middle. The exemplary teachers also encouraged self-regulation, much like the Delpit (1988) and de la luz Reyes (1992), who suggested the need for explicit error correction. These teachers used much scaffolding to make content accessible to students and they also had high expectations of all students, which contradicts the teachers who participated in Hernandez’ (1999) study of student writing. Both the teachers in the Hernandez study elected not to take courses to apply for a state certificate that prepared them to teach English learners, and they both assessed student writing solely on spelling errors.

A similar study produced similar findings. This next study followed 15 teachers who were identified by school administrators as the “most-effective-for-locale” (Pressley et al., 2001) and were compared with 15 “least-effective-for-locale” teachers. Much like teachers in

the Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998) study, this study found that the “most-effective-for-locale” teachers balanced skills instruction and whole language. They explicitly taught skills through an emphasis on literature. They also encouraged self-regulation and used a great deal of scaffolding.

Teachers of English Learners

Could the scaffolding found by both the Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998) and Pressley et al. (2001) studies help students not only gain literacy development, but also help bridge the gap between the culture of the classroom and the culture of the community? An assumption about English learners is that educational outcomes can be enhanced if teachers better understand them and design optimal learning environments for them (Goldenberg et al., 2006).

But what would constitute an optimal learning environment for English learners? One study sought to answer this question by following two teachers of English learners who were considered to implement innovative approaches to literacy and language development (Jimenez & Gersten, 1999). Both teachers were of Latino origin, bilingual in English and Spanish, recently engaged in professional literacy development, and had experience teaching Latino students. Both teachers were observed and interviewed. Both teachers were recognized by their school administrators and the researchers and deemed to be exemplary literacy teachers. While both were deemed exemplary, the two teachers subscribed to different instructional principles. One teacher rejected traditional models of instruction. He encouraged the participation of parents and community members into the classroom. He also activated the students’ background knowledge to help them make connections to new information. He

was also open to cross-linguistic transfer, allowing students to respond in either English or Spanish. The other teacher took the “infusion” approach to instructional change, attempting to include newer ideas related to literacy while maintaining her traditional approach. She often modeled how and when to use cognitive tools to her students. It was her intent to explicitly teach the cognitive strategy, such as finding information in text, as the learning objective. Despite the differences between their approaches to teaching literacy, both teachers included “Latino/a influences” on instruction: rapport, language, and culture. According to the authors, they shared the same attitude toward speaking in Spanish and were familiar with some cultural aspects of the families, such as the type of classroom management would be familiar to parents, as well as the level of expressions of affection that would be acceptable. Both teachers created an atmosphere of acceptance of the home language and culture of their students.

In another study of English learners by Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, Prater, and Cirino (2006), 48 first grade students were assessed on their letter naming, phonological awareness, blending words, segmenting words, and sound matching. Of these 48 students, 24 received their school’s existing early intervention instruction for struggling readers and the other 24 received systematic and explicit instruction in oral language and reading by trained bilingual reading intervention teachers. The intervention included supplemental instruction in phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, and alphabet decoding and comprehension strategies. The group who received the systematic and explicit instruction in oral language and reading performed on par with native-English speaking students on most of the tests.

Teachers in Urban Schools

This study aims to uncover what teachers of English learners do in the first grade in order to support their students with writing. The teachers in this study teach in a large urban school district. In a report by the NCES (2006-2007), they reviewed the characteristics of the 100 largest school districts in the United States in 2001 and found that while the English learner student population is growing in both urban and rural areas, a large number of English learners are enrolled in a few urban school districts in a few states. The studies in this section focus on the attributes of teachers who were effective at teaching in urban schools. Some of the characteristics students in urban schools may share are poverty and diverse cultural backgrounds (Haberman, 1995). Haberman (1995) observed and interviewed teachers starting in 1959 who were considered “outstandingly successful” at teaching in urban schools. He called these teachers “stars” and some of the characteristics they shared was that their students scored higher on many standardized tests than students in comparable classrooms, they recognized for their teaching by students, parents, other teachers and even office supervisors. According to Haberman (1995), teachers in urban schools face unique challenges because for their students, “having effective teachers is a matter of life and death. These children have no life options for achieving decent lives other than by experiencing success in school” (p. 1).

In many of the studies in this section, teachers are nominated as an example of an effective teacher. In some studies, the nominations are made by principals or literacy coaches, in other studies community members such as parents and church leaders are asked for their choice of an effective teacher. In one study conducted by Ladson-Billings (1995), teachers were nominated by a process called “community nomination” (Foster, 1991). Principals and

parents (mothers) were asked to identify outstanding teachers and they found eight teachers were included on both lists. One of the findings from this study was the use of culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy is “a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequalities that schools perpetuate” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469).

The model of culturally relevant pedagogy employed by these effective teachers fits in with the idea of lessening the impact between the culture of the classroom and the culture of the community. What else does the literature say about teaching in urban schools? In a study by Morrow, Tracey, Woo, and Pressley (1999), six exemplary first grade teachers were observed and interviewed. They were chosen by their supervisors and administrators as being successful in educating large portions of their students to be readers and writers. The teachers were observed multiple times by the authors and interviewed on their philosophy of literacy teaching. They found that the teachers used both direct, explicit instruction to teach skill development as well as encouraging social collaboration and problem solving.

Another study looked deeper into student writing and the impact of the first grade teacher. In this study by Coker (2006), writing samples from 309 students in over 16 schools were collected over 3 years and analyzed for quality and length. The author looked at factors such as students’ oral language skills, letter identification, the classroom environment and the first grade teacher. The author found that the effect of the first grade teacher was an accurate predictor of writing quality and length in the first year, but the impact was still felt 3 years later. This finding contradicts one of the findings from the seminal study by Bond and

Dykstra in 1967 (as cited in Bond & Dykstra, 1997) who found that the teacher was not an accurate predictor of student outcomes.

Based on the literature that exists in the three areas of study I have outlined for this dissertation, much evidence exists that teachers do, in fact, have an impact on student learning and achievement. Teachers within the third space have an understanding and appreciation of students' language and culture. This, combined with their willingness to explicitly teach literacy skills in the context of authentic literature, creates a culture of learning within the classroom walls that welcome the culture of the students beyond those walls.

This study is built on the foundation laid by the literature that exists in the areas of study that inhabit the third space: English learners and second-language writing, attributes of effective teachers and first grade literacy. The findings from these studies will allow me to use empirical data to analyze and re-examine the observation and interview data of a first grade teacher who was recommended by her school site administrator as being successful at teaching writing to first grade English learners.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

During the initial planning stages of this dissertation, my goal was to design a study that would answer the broad question, “What is the most effective way to teach English learners to write?” The very nature of this question implied that there was a formula or a set of instructions that would allow anyone to effectively teach writing to all English learners. Instead of looking for this elusive formula, I decided to look to classroom teachers for possible answers.

In order to find common attributes of these four teachers, the study was broken up into two stages. The first stage of the study was the original pilot study, which involved four public school teachers who were recognized by their school site administrator as being successful at teaching writing to English learners. These teachers were observed and interviewed. Then I used narrative inquiry to determine common attributes these teachers shared. I was able to uncover the common attributes shared by these teachers, but I was not able to determine if they were “successful” because I did not compare their actions to any research-based criteria.

For this study, I reanalyzed the observation and interview data of the first grade teacher that originally took part in this study using research-based criteria. I used the literature on teachers of English learners, urban schools, and first grade literacy, which

identified “successful” or “exemplary” teachers in order to form an observation framework that matches the attributes of the “third space.” While Gutierrez et al. (1997) suggest scenarios of how teaching in the third space should look, they do not offer an evidence based “checklist” to use as an observation framework. The purpose of reanalyzing this observation data was to determine if this teacher, who was initially recommended for this study by her school site administrator, was indeed, teaching in the third space. Could that be the reason she was considered successful at teaching writing to English learners?

For the pilot study, administrators were contacted by e-mail and given the selection criteria for the teachers in this study. I asked them to nominate teachers who were successful in teaching writing to English learners. While they were not explicitly told how to choose the participants; rather, they were given the authority to determine the best qualified teachers. In order for the subjects to feel comfortable participating or not participating, after the principals contacted eligible teachers, I sent a letter asking if the teachers would be willing to participate in the study but I gave them the option of abstaining. Fortunately, all four teachers willingly participated. The participants were observed for 3 full days, and hand-written notes were taken by the researcher. The subjects were not asked to teach any special lessons or adjust the teaching schedule in any way to accommodate the study. The decision to use hand-written notes, as opposed to laptop notes, was intentional. I did not wish to distract the students any more than necessary by using the technology. I also wanted to be able to walk around the classroom to take notes. The participants were interviewed on the third day of observations either after school or during lunch. The interviews were recorded using an MP3 player, then used for transcription purposes. The subjects were also observed for 3 full days so the researcher was able to observe for the equivalent of a complete school day, including some

extra-curricular activities such as visits to the school library and school assemblies. The 3 days allowed the researcher to “join the narrative, to become part of the landscape” and “be a sensitive reader of and questioner of situations in an effort to grasp the huge number of events and stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 77). The interview questions reflected some of these events and stories that took place during the classroom observations.

OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

I asked questions during the interview to elicit narratives. Some of the questions in the interview were designed using the survey interview approach to gather information about the participant such as level of education and teaching experience. Other questions were written using the narrative inquiry approach so that the participant can tell a story. The questions were written to elicit experiences that these teachers perceived to have contributed to being a successful teacher of writing to English learners (Appendix A). The researcher also asked questions about events that took place during the three observation dates so that each participant had an opportunity to explain the rationale behind the activities. It was anticipated that this approach would yield narratives that reveal common attitudes, beliefs, practices and values among the teachers in this study.

ANALYSIS OF TEACHER INTERVIEW AND OBSERVATIONS

For this study, I reanalyzed the observation and interview data of the first grade teacher that originally took part in this study using research-based criteria. This research-based criteria came from literature and research that revealed attributes of effective teachers of English learners, teachers of urban schools, and teachers of first grade literacy. David Pearson (1996), in his article about the “radical middle,” provides a list of attributes for

teaching in the “radical middle,” while Gutierrez et al. (1997), provide scenarios of what a classroom in the third space would look like. These two ideas, plus the findings from the following studies will form the observation framework to analyze the observations and interview data of the first grade teacher (Table 1).

Table 1. Data Analysis Instruments

Observation Framework for Teacher Interview and Observations	
Attributes of Effective Teachers of English	
Appendix B	Jimenez and Gersten (1999) Construct for observations
Appendix C	Vaughn et al. (2006) Intervention strategies
Appendix D	de la luz Reyes (1992) Challenges to common assumptions about English learners
Attributes of Effective and Exemplary First Grade Teachers	
Appendix E	Pressley et al. (2001) Effective primary teachers
Appendix F	Wharton-McDonald et al. (1988) Characteristics of high-achievement teachers
Appendix G	Morrow et al. (1999) Characteristics of exemplary first grade instruction
Attributes of Effective Teachers in Urban Schools	
Appendix H	Ladson-Billings (1995) Culturally relevant pedagogy
Appendix I	Delpit (1988) Aspects of power
Appendix J	Sachs (2004) Attributes of urban teachers

Two studies of teachers of English learners were selected based on their findings of what effective teachers of English learners look like. Jimenez and Gersten (1999) were able to observe two Latina teachers who were considered “exemplary” by their administrators at teaching literacy development to their English learner students. They devised a construct for observing effective teaching (Appendix B) based on previous studies of effective teaching (Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995, 1996). In another study on English learners by Vaughn, et al. (2006), students who were given intervention strategies during literacy instruction outperformed the control group of students with regard to naming letters and phonological awareness. The intervention included six instructional practices that were validated by Gersten and Gevea (2003; Appendix C). A third article by de la luz Reyes (1992) will be included. She challenges assumptions often made about teaching English learners, then provides evidence to support these arguments by citing research (Appendix D).

There are several articles that are supported by research that suggest effective ways to teach first grade literacy. The studies of Pressley et al. (2001), Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998), and Morrow et al. (1999) uncovered attributes of effective and exemplary teachers of first-grade literacy. In each study, exemplary teachers were observed and interviewed and commonalities among them were compiled (Appendices E, F, G).

In addition to literature regarding the attributes of effective teachers of English learners and first grade literacy, there exist studies of effective teachers in urban schools. These articles suggest attributes of effective teachers in urban settings, or “culturally relevant teachers” (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The article by Ladson-Billings (1995) defines “culturally relevant pedagogy” and how teachers would structure their instruction (Appendix H). These ideas, combined with Delpit’s (1988) “aspects of power,” will contribute to the observation

framework (Appendix I). A study by Sachs (2004) also utilized a list of attributes of urban teachers. This list was used to analyze teachers who were considered effective in urban schools (Appendix J).

For the purpose of this data analysis, the findings from the literature were to create an observation framework; however, the literature selected for this purpose must not be distilled down to a “checklist.” The literature I selected for the observation framework all discuss in great detail the complexities of both the instruction observed, the classroom context as well as the data collection methods. The authors of each of the studies and articles spent many years on careful analysis of teaching and learning. While the findings themselves may provide a useful “list,” each individual finding represents years of preparation and education of both the teacher observed as well as the researcher observing. The findings from each study were used as part of the lens for both observation and analysis.

PARTICIPANT

The participants of the original pilot study were four public elementary school teachers who have been recognized as successfully teaching writing to English learners by their administrators (former literacy coaches). Each participant teaches a self-contained primary grade class (K-2) and teaches at a public school in a large urban school district in southern California. The teachers in this study came from two elementary schools within the same large urban district and each school qualifies for Title I funding. Three of the teachers teach at the same school. Fictitious names are used to maintain the anonymity of the teachers, schools, and school district. For this study, I will focus on one of the original teachers who

taught first grade. She taught in a school with 631 students enrolled during the 2006-2007 school year and there were a total of 402 English learners during the 2005-2006 school year.

Adriana teaches first grade. She has taught both kindergarten and first grade at the same school for 5 years. She majored in English and initially wanted to teach high school English but at 21 years of age, she didn't think the age difference was significant enough to distinguish her from the teenagers who would be her students. She also has a master's degree in Creative Literacy and Literature. Although she doesn't imagine she'll ever teach high school English because of her "fear of change" she often wonders if she could be "teaching Milton or Shakespeare or talking about the Canon—things I really have a passion for."

Adriana believes that a challenge for English learners is lack of vocabulary. She also believes that English learners would benefit from more exposure to experiences outside of school so that they can better make connections while reading and writing. Because of this belief, she places just as much importance of making time for science and social studies (Table 2).

Table 2. Study Participant

Adriana
First grade teacher
5 years experience
English major
Single subject teaching credential in English
MA in Creative Literacy and Literature
Multiple Subjects Teaching Credential

DATA COLLECTION

Participants who were recognized by the school site administrator as being successful at teaching writing to English learners were selected for this study. In the original pilot study, the participants were observed for 3 full days and hand-written notes were taken by the researcher. The participants were not asked to teach any special lessons or adjust the teaching schedule in any way to accommodate the study. They were interviewed on the final day of observations. The participants were observed for 3 full days so the researcher was able to observe a complete school day, including some extra-curricular activities such as visits to the school library and school assemblies. The three days allowed the researcher to “join the narrative, to become part of the landscape” and “be a sensitive reader of and questioner of situations in an effort to grasp the huge number of events and stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 78). The interview questions reflected some of these events and stories that took place during the classroom observations.

I took extensive hand-written notes of all the classroom instruction that took place around literacy and writing, even if it did not occur during the language arts block. These notes were later typed up as a Word document and analyzed and included notes on classroom environment, student behavior, and classroom discourse.

The questions in the interview were designed using the survey interview approach to gather information about the participant such as level of education and teaching experience. Other questions were written using the narrative inquiry approach so that the participant can tell their story. The questions were written to elicit experiences that these teachers perceived to have contributed to being a successful teacher of writing to English learners (Appendix A). In addition, the researcher asked questions about events that took place during the three

observation dates so that the participants had an opportunity to explain the rationale behind the activities. It was anticipated that this approach would yield narratives that reveal common attitudes, beliefs, practices, and values among the teachers in this study. The interviews took place after school after the third day of observations. In addition to interview data, notes from informal comments and conversation throughout the day were included in the data analysis collection.

Administrators were contacted by e-mail and given the selection criteria for the teachers in this study. Both school administrators have experience as both a classroom teacher and a literacy coach. In this school district, the literacy coach is responsible for professional development of teachers on how to use the district reading program (Open Court Reading) but also provide support for all literacy activities. Because of their experience as a classroom teacher in urban settings, a literacy coach, and an administrator, I trusted their judgment in selecting the teachers.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

In order to determine how a successful teacher of writing to first grade English learners matches the attributes of “effective” and “exemplary” teachers found in the literature, I analyzed the observation and interview data of a first grade teacher who participated in my original pilot study. In the original study I took an inductive approach to analyzing the observation and interview data of four teachers to find common attributes. For this dissertation I am taking a deductive approach to analyzing the interview and observation data by using an observation framework inspired by the theory of the third space (Gutierrez et al., 1997)—a theoretical view of literacy that represents a place where curriculum intersects with language and culture. Because there are no studies to validate the theory of the third space, I used findings from the literature and research that addressed the main components: English learners, first grade literacy, and urban schools. The findings from each article were used as a lens to analyze the interview and observation notes of the first grade teacher, Adriana, who was nominated for the original pilot study based on her successful teaching of writing to English learners. A review of the analyzed interview and observation data is included in this chapter.

ANALYSIS OF TEACHER INTERVIEW AND OBSERVATIONS

Adriana kept to a consistent daily schedule over the course of the 3-day observations. Each day began at 8:00 with a an opening activity such as browsing through books or taking care of classroom business. At 8:10, the language arts block began and continued until 11:35. During the language arts block, Adriana began with English language development for 30 minutes. During the 3-day observation, she used this time to visit the school library, teach a character education lesson, and read books in the classroom. This school district adopted the Open Court Reading (OCR) program and Adriana stayed close to the suggested pacing plan. She engaged the students in explicit phonics and blending activities, literature circles, utilized an instructional aide for differentiated instruction, and gave lessons on writing activities such as finding the golden line, show-not-tell, and going from a watermelon idea (general) to a seed idea (specific).

Math took place after lunch from 12:20-1:10 and included numerical, procedural lessons but Adriana also taught her students how to create surveys and graphs. Students are taught how to write out survey questions then translate the response into graphs. Writer's Workshop followed math from 1:10-1:50. During this time, Adriana often referred back to the writing ideas shared earlier in the day and instructed students to use these ideas, such as the watermelon/seed and show-not-tell. Adriana often modeled how to use one of these writing ideas and thought out loud. She also modeled how to conduct a peer conference with another student and encouraged her students to do the same.

Following Writer's Workshop was either social studies or science from 1:50-2:20. Social studies were taught 2 out of the 3 days and the students extended the theme of one of the stories they read during language arts. Adriana asked her students to think about the rules

of games and then the class wrote up the rules of a game to share with another class. Science was observed once during the 3 days and the lesson was about properties of water. Adriana showed them a bowl of water and an empty cup. She placed a dry paper towel in the cup then pushed the cup, upside down into the water. Students were asked to make predictions and write them in their science journal. Then they discussed what happened, and write again in their science journals. At 2:20, Adriana gave homework and prepared for the 2:30 dismissal.

English Learners

The findings from three articles on the effective teaching of English learners were used to analyze the interview and observation notes of a first grade teacher nominated as being successful at teaching writing to English learners.

ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

The first article, Appendix B, by Jimenez and Gersten (1999), contains a construct for observing effective teaching. This construct for observations lists nine characteristics found in effective teaching of English learners: challenge, involvement, success, scaffolding and cognitive strategies, mediation and feedback, monitoring and awareness of student progress and learning, cooperative learning, sheltered English, and incorporating cultural diversity into instruction. In general, all these characteristics were found in the interview and observation data of Adriana, but not to the same extent. One surprising finding was the absence of incorporating cultural diversity into instruction, which is one of the attributes of an effective teacher of English learners. Over the course of the 3-day observation and interview, cultural diversity never came up. One possible reason is that all 20 students in this class were Latino,

and Adriana is Latina, so they share a common background. It is also possible that cultural diversity does take place, but did not during the course of the observations.

Despite the absence of incorporating cultural diversity, all the other characteristics were observed during the 3-day observation period. Some characteristics stood out due to how frequently they were observed. Table 3 shows the frequency these characteristics were evident during the interview and over the course of the 3-day observation period.

Table 3. Attributes of Effective Teachers of English Learners

	Interview	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3
Challenge: implicit or explicit	1	2	15	7
Involvement		4	4	7
Success		5	6	5
Scaffolding/cognitive strategies		12	18	8
Mediation/feedback		7	18	9
Monitoring/awareness of student progress and learning		7	5	1
Cooperative learning and beyond		5	2	1
Techniques for second language acquisition/sheltered English		1	4	
Incorporating cultural diversity into instruction				

One significant finding is the integration of challenge during the lesson. Adriana incorporated both implicit and explicit challenge multiple times over the course of the 3-day observation. She demonstrated explicit challenge by having high but reasonable expectations

of her students. When asked about her personal philosophy of teaching English learners, her response revealed her high expectations of her students.

My personal philosophy is that I am going to hold them accountable and up to par with the other kids. Second language, some of them with a lack of vocabulary might be a hindrance but I don't think of them as second language learners. I think of them as 1st grade learners. You're here in first grade, you're going to learn. This is what you're going to learn. I have to find a way to make sure you learn this and that's it.

Her response shows that she does not see her English learners as having a deficit, but rather, they are like all first graders and she will hold them accountable for first grade material. She does not place the responsibility solely on the student, but places much of the responsibility on herself. In the last sentence, she strongly asserts that it is her job as the teacher to support her students in learning. Adriana also demonstrates implicit challenge by asking higher order questions to move student thinking forward. During one lesson based on a story in the adopted literacy series, Adriana wanted her students to start thinking about the character from the story, Jafta, and what he did for fun. This was in preparation for a lesson on similes. She asked them to think about what Jafta did in the story, but when a student answered, she continued to ask more questions to move that student's thinking forward.

- T: Close your books and sit up. Jafta tells us what animals he likes to pretend to be. I asked you what this has to do with our games unit. Think about that. What did Jafta have to do about games?
- S: He's copy other animals like a game.
- T: So you think that "copy the animals" is a game?
- S: Maybe the other cultures—that's what they do for fun.
- T: Maybe in African cultures that's what we do for fun.

This simple interaction paved the way for the students to think about ways to copy animals.

While the students came up with ways to copy the animals, Adriana introduced a sentence frame for them to use that included a simile.

T: you fly like a . . .

S: eagle

S: so maybe in his culture he likes to play that game.

T: If I want to think about the two things about Jafta when he's happy and when he's cross. I want you to brainstorm. You will use this sentence frame.

T (writes): When I'm happy, I ____ like a ____.

S: and he tells us one animal

By asking higher order questions about the story they had just read, Adriana was able to move the lesson toward similes. Another characteristic that stood out was her use of scaffolding and demonstrating cognitive strategies. When asked about how she scaffolded the adopted literacy series for her English learners, she responded:

I think just debriefing about it. Reading it and you just saw, we just started the anthology. Before this we had a big book which was with very short stories or poems. We'll read something and "OK, let's talk about it." I try to model what I do like, "Oh, I made a connection" or "I did this." Try to scaffold models for them what they should be doing as readers. I think I tell them too, a lot, if you are being a good reader, you will be thinking. You will be doing this. You will be doing that. So I think it is a lot of modeling.

She was very clear on how to model comprehension and writing strategies and often utilized metacognitive strategies while modeling. During a mini-lesson in Writer's Workshop, she explained how to write about specific topics, instead of broad topics. She called the broad topics "watermelons" and the specific topics "seeds."

Remember our ideas are like watermelon ideas, big ideas. We can focus on a little idea, like a seed. Today I will model how I go from a watermelon to a seed. I will ask you what you observed during my mini lesson.

In addition to explaining this concept, she told the students she would model it for them, then modeled it.

I'm talking out loud. I have to brainstorm. I went to my aunt's house and I had fun. But if I told everything, it would be a watermelon. I'm going to tell a story about what my aunt asked me to do. She asked me to feed Jesse but he kept turning his head.

This type of explicit explanation and modeling occurred consistently over the course of the 3-day observation. According to Jimenez and Gersten (1999) an effective teacher of English learners will frequently support students by “thinking aloud.”

Another characteristic they identified was the ability to use mediation and provide meaningful feedback to students. This type of mediation is described as “questions that press students to clarify or expand on initial statements” and “extent to which teacher provides students with strategies.” During a science activity, Adriana placed a dry paper towel into a plastic cup then asked her students to predict what would happen if she pushed the cup upside down under water. After the predictions, she dunked the cup while the students sat in amazement when she pulled out a dry paper towel.

- T: Scientists try different things. So that wasn't the answer to the question. Why didn't the paper towel get wet?
- S: The cup is covering the paper towel. When you put it on the bottom, the water can't get it.
- T: You're right. The water didn't go in, but why?
- S: Because the cup was blocking the napkin.
- S: Like a shelter.
- S: The cup was blocking all the water.
- T: You are getting close scientists. Remember when I asked you what's in the cup? You said nothing.
- S: Air!

During this line of questioning, Adriana asked questions, listened to the student's response, then asked more questions to press her students to clarify. This mediation and feedback eventually helped the student come to the “right” answer in that the cup was full of air, thus displacing any space for water.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

The second study in the observation framework (Appendix C) was by Vaughn et al. (2006) who compared English learners given a specific intervention and outperformed a control group given their traditional literacy instruction. The intervention consisted of six instructional practices as by Gersten and Gevea (2003). All six instructional practices were evident during Adriana's interview and over the course of the 3-day observation. What stood out in both frequency and quality was her use of explicit teaching and interactive teaching (Table 4).

Table 4. Instructional Practices

	Interview	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3
Explicit teaching	1	7	19	16
English learning	1	4	2	1
Phonemic awareness and decoding		2	3	6
Vocabulary development	1	3	1	7
Interactive teaching	1	10	17	9
Instruction geared toward low performers	1	7	9	10

Gersten and Gevea's (2003) description of explicit teaching is very similar to Jimenez and Gersten's (1999) explicit challenge. According to Gersten and Gevea, explicit teaching includes modeling of skills and strategies, making relationships overt, and emphasizing distinctive features of new concepts. During Writer's Workshop, Adriana noticed that many students were not doing a self-conference, which was part of their writing process. She made

it clear that she noticed that many students were not doing a self-conference and made a point to model how to do a self conference.

Some of you are not asking for a teacher conference. I will model a self conference. Sit in your special squares. Everyone pay attention because you will do a self-conference. Everyone listen. I finished drafting but before a teacher or peer conference. I need a student conference. Let me look at the poster and see if I have everything I need. Reread it. The first thing to ask myself, “Does it make sense?” A beginning, middle and end. The next question, can I make it better?

She then went into a story about feeding her baby cousin and the dialogue that took place.

Right after telling the story and modeling what aspects she would include, she asked students to recount what she said and asked, “Now, how did I begin a self-conference?”

A second strategy that stood out in Adriana’s teaching is the use of interactive teaching. Gersten and Gevea (2003) define interactive teaching as maintaining student attention during lessons, making sure students are on task and incorporating student responses, ideas and experiences into the lesson. Following the modeling of a self-conference, Adriana maintained student attention by asking questions.

T: Now, how did I begin a self-conference?

Ss: Rereading it

T: Then what?

S: Does it make sense?

T: Then what did I ask myself?

S: Can I make it better?

T: So how can I make it better?

S: You edit

Students are also encouraged to participate in the lesson and are given opportunities to read chorally during a reading lesson. Adriana asks students to read chorally then interacts with students by stopping occasionally to ask questions.

T: Please read it on your own

Ss: Read out loud

S: I don’t get this page

T: We need to clarify. Let's go back and reread it.

T and students chorally read

T: What's happening?

S: The little boy plays with the bear.

T: Did you hear it? So far the little boy named Matthew went up to bear to ask if he would like to play a game.

Ss read on their own

T: Everyone finished? Let's read it together.

T and students read chorally

T: What's going on?

S: He doesn't like the game

T: He doesn't know what the game is.

During this brief interaction, Adriana maintained the attention and focus of all students in the class. Even the students who were not answering questions were prepared to read chorally with a partner.

CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT TEACHING ENGLISH LEARNERS

The third article in this section (Appendix D) related to the study of English learners is a conceptual piece by Maria de la luz Reyes (1992) who cites research that challenges basic assumptions on teaching English learners. De la luz Reyes cites research that refutes the assumption that "English is the only legitimate medium for learning and instruction" yet Adriana is rarely heard over the 3-day observation translating or referring to her students' primary language (Table 5). In this classroom, all students were from Spanish-speaking homes. There were no references to English immersion compared to a more gradual transitional approach.

Instead, there were multiple instances where Adriana demonstrated modifying standard curriculum in order to tailor the "one size fits all" approach often prescribed by programs that were not initially designed for English learners. De la luz Reyes (1992)

Table 5. Challenging Assumptions About Teaching English Learners

	Interview	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3
English is the only legitimate medium for learning and instruction			1	1
Linguistic minorities must be immersed in English as quickly as possible if they are to succeed in school				
A “one size fits all” approach is good for students	8	8	13	12
Error correction in process instruction hampers learning		5	3	2

explains that many literacy programs, such as Writing Workshop, were not designed with the English learner, or any linguistically or culturally diverse student, in mind. She states that teachers must be able to tailor these programs in order to meet the needs of English learners.

Adriana scheduled time for Writing Workshop every day during the observation period. She followed the general guidelines of Writing Workshop such as following the writing process and conferencing. In her interview, when asked about the challenges her students faced while learning to write, her response showed that she was well aware of her students’ writing challenges and needs.

I see 2 really big challenges. A lot of lack of vocabulary. Lack of vocabulary and I don’t know if this pertains to EL’s in general, based on my populations, and every year most of them are ELs. Sometimes I think, maybe lack of background or lack of knowing what to write about. They seem to stick to the same topic. “I went to the park. My mom and I went to the park.” So I think the challenge for them is trying to figure out, within their daily lives, especially when doing narratives, what else they can write about and then try to find the vocabulary to write about that. Sometimes they might have the experiences but they don’t have the words for it. They don’t know how to put that cohesively into a sentence. So that’s what I’ve seen as my biggest challenge for them. Getting them out of the same, I know

how to write “I went to the park” so I’m going to keep it safe and write, “I went to the park.”

Adriana spoke of her students’ needs to expand not just their vocabulary, but also their background knowledge. She addresses this in part, by giving explicit examples and instruction during Writer’s Workshop. Instead of teaching a mini-lesson that is often considered a suggestion, she makes sure to explicitly model and explain.

Everyone is going to take out Writer’s Workshop notebook, then turn to a clean page. Write date and write “Show not tell.” This is what you are going to show me. The sentence you are going to revise is “I am mad.” What do you do? What do you look like when you are mad? Pretend you are mad.

She made sure to give explicit directions during writing workshop so that her students had a clear idea of what to do. According to de la luz Reyes (1992), language and cultural minority students often expect their teachers to tell them exactly what they need to do, instead of being able to read subtle cues and inferences. De la luz Reyes also challenges the assumption that error correction hampers the learning process. She claims that students often want to know if they are doing something incorrectly so they can change it. She also states that students who are not given explicit corrections may not realize that they have made any kind of error. Adriana showed many examples of explicitly correcting her students’ spoken errors. During a grammar lesson, she reviewed verbs.

T: We talked about verbs before. Who can tell me what a verb is?

S: Describe.

T: That’s an adjective.

S: It’s an action word.

In this brief interaction, Adriana asks a student to tell her what a verb is. The student incorrectly answers and Adriana immediately corrects the error. In a second example, the student incorrectly uses a word and again, Adriana immediately corrects the error.

- T: I went to the bank to get some money.
 S: Something to get money.
 T: Something?
 S: Somewhere.
 T: So a place you can go and get or deposit money.

It is not clear if this type of error correction will result in correct usage by the student, but according to the research cited by de la luz Reyes (1992), it is more effective than redirecting or responding using the correct wording.

DISCUSSION

These three articles on the exemplary attributes of teachers of English learners were used to analyze Adriana's interview and observation notes. These articles, Appendices B-D, included strategies used by effective teachers. One unexpected finding while analyzing the interview and observation notes was the absence of Sheltered English and ESL strategies often recommended to teachers of English learners. Instead, Adriana had high expectations for her students and asked questions to maintain her students' interest and motivation during lessons. She also modified programs such as writing workshop and included explicit directions and scaffolding to meet the linguistic needs of her students. She also made sure to correct student errors and include their ideas and responses into the lesson.

First Grade Literacy

This next section will include the findings from three articles on the effective teaching of first-grade literacy. These three articles (Appendices E-G) were used to analyze the interview and observation notes of a first grade teacher nominated as being successful at teaching writing to English learners.

ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS OF FIRST GRADE LITERACY

This first article in this section, Appendix E, is a study conducted by Pressley et al. (2001). In this study, the most effective first grade teachers were compared with the least-effective first grade teachers. The following behaviors and characteristics were found among the most effective first grade teachers (Table 6).

Table 6. Attributes of Effective Teachers of First Grade Literacy

	Interview	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3
Excellent classroom management		2	2	
Positive, reinforcing, cooperative environment		3	3	1
Balancing of skills, instruction, and whole language: teaching of skills, literature emphasis, and much reading and writing		4	4	5
Match of accelerating demands to student competence, with a great deal of scaffolding	2	4	2	2
Self-regulation encouraged	1	9	3	4
Strong connections across the curriculum	3	4	2	3

I did not mark every instance of excellent classroom management, even though Adriana did indeed have excellent classroom management. In fact, her classroom was so well run that the classroom management was transparent. In the 3 days I observed in her classroom, I never saw the need for any kind of consequence or reward. Instead, I focused on the remaining behaviors. One behavior that occurred frequently was encouraging self-

regulation among students. Pressley et al. (2001) list some of the attributes of encouraging self-regulation as modeling self-regulation, explicitly teaching it, and expecting it of students. One example of encouraging self-regulation occurred during writing workshop. Adriana encouraged her students to read over their drafts to see if it made sense.

When you finish your draft ask yourself if it makes sense. Is there anything I can do to make it better? Let me share what Ashley is doing? She drafted the story then she wanted to edit. But she needed to do a self-conference. Just like Ashley is.

Again, Adriana is modeling but she is also making sure her students know how to edit their drafts and ask the right questions. In this next example, Adriana asks students how to find information.

T: Try it quietly on your own. Then we will read it chorally.

S: What's a piggle?

T: I don't know. How do we find out?

Ss: Read it.

Adriana also frequently utilized some sort of pair-share where students talk to each other. This was often used as a tool for discussion and checking for understanding.

S: We finished by hawk, armadillos and cow card.

T asks students to tell partners what to do

Ss: Tell each other.

A second finding from Appendix E is the frequency of strong connections across the curriculum. Writing during language arts, writing workshop, math, social studies, and science were observed. Some of the attributes include across-curriculum connections and writing occurs in the context of science and social studies instruction. Adriana taught a science lesson on the properties of water and how it would appear in tube that was held at an angle. The students were encouraged to make predictions.

First predict what the water will look like if you tip the containers. Once you have all your predictions you will check them like real scientists do. At the end, we will take out our journals and write what we observed. What are we doing today?

Adriana also used content vocabulary so the students could include it in their discussion as well as their writing. The vocabulary was previewed before this experiment.

T holds a thick liquid

S: Viscous

T shows a clear liquid.

Ss: Colorless!

T: Today, we'll do what real scientists do. They make a prediction and check their prediction.

S: If the bubbles stay on top, it's foamy.

T: Close your eyes and visualize a glass with water that is sitting on top of your table. Now visualize it as you tip it over. What does it look like? Does it look the same? Today we are going to make predictions as we tip the water.

The students were encouraged to write their predictions as well as draw pictures of how the water would look in the containers held at different angles.

ATTRIBUTES OF OUTSTANDING TEACHERS OF FIRST GRADE LITERACY

The second study on first-grade literacy (Appendix F) was conducted by Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998). This study examined nine first-grade teachers who were nominated as “outstanding.” These teachers were interviewed and observed to determine what characteristics they had in common (Table 7).

One of the key findings was the concept of “instructional density.” Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998) describe it as “multiple goals into a single lesson” and the teachers “never seemed to do just one thing at a time” (p. 115). Adriana constantly moved around and circulated to talk with individual students. She never wasted any time and every moment was

Table 7. Attributes of Outstanding Teachers of First Grade Literacy

	Interview	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3
Instructional balance	1	3	1	7
Instructional density	2	9	3	8
Extensive use of scaffolding	4	5	17	12
Encouragement of self-regulation	1	12	7	8
Thorough integration of reading and writing activities	1	5	5	9
High expectations for all students	3			
Masterful classroom management		4	2	3
Awareness of purpose	3	3	1	6

used efficiently. When I asked her about her ability to fit so much instruction into the school day, she responded in such a way that revealed her sense of purpose.

Yeah, somehow! I'm going mad by the end of the day! [laughs] But I try to fit it in because, this is all in tangent now, but they get to a point where they get tested on this. 4th and 5th grade get state tested on this. State Assessment. But because of our program, because of the time that is mandated by the district or the state, you really leave certain things out. You don't expose them and they get to a certain point and we expect them to know, but we haven't exposed them so how can we really hold them accountable?

She understood how important it was to make sure her students were at least exposed to everything they would eventually be tested on—even if that testing did not happen until the students got to the fourth or fifth grades. Much like in previous studies, this study found that scaffolding played an important role in effective teaching. Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998) describe it as “monitoring student thought processes as they taught and interceded with just enough help to facilitate learning” and that it “often took the form of questioning” (p. 116).

Adriana, when asked about how she scaffolded writing for the student with the low ELD level, described the different kinds of questions she asks.

My approach to that child is just constant, coming back constantly to that child. What are you doing right now? Get constant questioning. Now what are you going to do? Tell me what you are doing right now. What are you doing next? Can you read this over to me? I think a lot of times what happens is, the kids who are the lowest ELD level, their writing reflects their spoken language. So some of them don't really have a lot of oral vocabulary. Or sentence structure in English. Or their first language for that matter, for some of them. I think in a way it is trying to make sense of what they are trying to say in their broken English and trying to restate it in formal English and see if, ok, "Do you mean blank? Oh you want to write blank. Oh you are going to write blank" and see if it comes across.

During the 3-day observation period, Adriana was frequently observed asking these types of questions while her students were writing. She never seemed to stay in one place very long. She was observed briefly conferencing with a student, then quickly moving on to the next student.

A third finding from the analysis using this article is the encouragement of self-regulation. This same idea was found in Pressley et al.'s (2001) study as well. According to Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998) an effective teacher encourages self-regulation by pointing out instances where students self-correct.

T: First thing, just like writer's workshop, re-read what you wrote before adding more.

T hands Ss back their writing

Ss sit down and work

T: Oh, I see Owen re-reading just like good writers do.

Adriana pointed out what Owen was doing as an example to the rest of the students. She often selected a student and used him or her as an example of what she wanted the rest of the class to do.

ATTRIBUTES OF EXEMPLARY TEACHERS OF FIRST GRADE LITERACY

The third article (Appendix G) that focused on first-grade literacy was by Morrow et al. (1999). In this study, the researchers observed and interviewed six first grade teachers who were selected by their administrators as being exemplary at literacy instruction. From this study, nine characteristics were found to be shared among these exemplary teachers (Table 8). Again, Adriana had excellent classroom management so it did not stand out necessarily as a key finding. Instead, the types of reading experiences, daily writing in different forms and teachable moments stood out as key findings.

Table 8. Attributes of Exemplary Teachers of First Grade Literacy

	Interview	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3
Literacy rich environments		3	1	2
Many types of reading experiences		15	10	7
Daily writing in different forms	1	7	15	8
Planned and spontaneous skill	1	7	6	7
Development (explicit)		6	6	7
Teachable moments		4	3	
Content area literacy		8	1	1
Effective classroom management		6	4	3
Good planning	1			
Based their classroom on their philosophies, were consciously aware of their philosophies and could articulate them	4			

During the 3-day period, many types of reading experiences were observed. Students read chorally, in pairs, alone, or with the teacher. They read sentences from the board, posters and stories from their anthologies. Many different forms of daily writing were also observed. Adriana scheduled time daily for writing workshop, but writing also took place in science journals, daily graphing questions, math, and social studies. Students wrote surveys, made predictions and directions for a game to be shared with another class.

The third key finding was the frequency of teachable moments. Morrow et al. (1999) describe a teachable moment as “seizing opportunities” (p. 468). Adriana was adept at seizing opportunities and turning it into a teachable moment. She often noticed students who were doing something well, like editing, self-conference, or even working well in pairs. Adriana would stop to point this out to the rest of the class. In this example, she was reviewing the lesson on similes from the day before. One student gave the examples of vivid verbs, which were also taught previously.

T: Today we are going to read a new selection titled Jaffa. Let’s review what we did yesterday. Yesterday we talked about similes.

S: Like when you talk and use shout or whisper.

T: You’re right. We did the vivid verbs but we also talked about similes. They compare so that the person can get a better idea. If I say, “My sister is as lazy as a sloth.” That means she is very lazy. If I tell you, “My dad runs fast.” But if I say, “My dad runs as fast as a cheetah” you think, “Wow, he must be a fast runner.”

Adriana noticed that a student was confused about the difference between a simile and vivid verbs. She took this opportunity to briefly confirm and clarify, but continued on with the lesson on similes.

DISCUSSION

The findings from the three studies on first grade literacy were used to analyze Adriana's interview and observation data. One surprising finding was the lack of whole language instruction. There was much access to literature, but for the most part, there was explicit skills instruction. One possibility was the required use of the adopted literacy curriculum which is very structured. The highlights of this analysis were the encouragement of student self-regulation and the instructional density. Adriana took great care to expose her students to the required content and gave them many opportunities to do so.

Urban Schools

This next section includes three articles on the attributes of teachers in urban schools. This section was inspired by the sociocultural aspect of the third space in that literacy instruction intersects with language and culture. All the articles in this section describe urban culture. The term "urban" is often associated with African-American students, and the articles also make this connection, but I selected these articles based on their descriptions of students who are both linguistically and culturally diverse.

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

The first article is by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) on culturally relevant pedagogy (Appendix H). She cites multiple studies where teachers who are nominated by administrators, students, and parents, as being "exemplary teachers of African-American students" (p. 477) are observed for common characteristics. From these studies, she found three shared propositions: concept of self, social relations, and concepts of knowledge. I

analyzed Adriana's interview and observation notes using these concepts and found that social relations and concepts of knowledge played key roles in her teaching (Table 9).

Table 9. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

	Interview	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3
Concepts of self	2			
Social relations		11	3	8
Concepts of knowledge	3	5	5	13

According to Ladson-Billings (1999), social relations refers to the social interactions within the classroom. She used an example where teachers give students opportunities to act as teachers. She also stated that in an urban classroom with an exemplary teacher, students are encouraged to “be responsible for the academic success of others” (p. 481) and work collaboratively. Adriana often used students as examples of behavior, as was evident in the teachable moment by Morrow et al. (1999). In this example, Adriana noticed that Eric was independently working on a self-conference during writing workshop. She used this teachable moment to make Eric the teacher and demonstrate the correct way to go about doing a self-conference.

Eric had a self-conference. He used his checklist to ask if he could make it better. Now how can I make it better? Eric said revise. We used that chart about how good writers write. They use dialogue, details, speech bubbles. What are you going to do? Ask yourself, “How am I going to make it better?”

Adriana used this teachable moment to also encourage self-regulation, a concept that was mentioned twice in the literature on English learners. The second key finding was the conceptions of knowledge, described by Ladson-Billings (1995) as knowledge that is “not

static” and that teachers must “scaffold, or build bridges, to facilitate learning” (p. 481).

Adriana frequently scaffolded by thinking aloud. During a writing mini-lesson on modeling a self-conference, Adriana scaffolds by metacognitively demonstrating the steps of a self-conference.

The first thing to ask myself, “Does it make sense?” A beginning, middle, and end. The next question, can I make it better? Hmmm . . . I wrote what my aunt says. Maybe I can add dialogue to the story to make it better. Oh his name is Jesse. He’s my little cousin. I’ll write that. I think I can do dialogue right there. I yelled, what did I yell? Oh yeah, “come get your naughty son!” So I added dialogue to make it better. Now I can have a peer conference and go back to my seat.

Adriana walked through the steps and even shared a little about herself in the process, thereby building a bridge to understanding how to conduct a self-conference with the goal of improving student writing.

ASPECTS OF POWER

The second article in this section on urban schools (Appendix I) is by Lisa Delpit (1988) in her article on the “culture of power.” Delpit does not see the debate between “skills” and “process,” as in Pearson’s “Radical Middle” in his 2004 argument against the “reading wars.” Instead, Delpit points to the idea of power and access to it. She asserts that students, in this case African-American students, often do not know the “codes” to access the culture of power and describes five “aspects of power” (Table 10).

One of the key findings from this article was Adriana appeared to understand the “codes or rules for participating in power” (Delpit, 1995, p. 282). Delpit (1995) describes these “codes” in reference to “linguistic forms, communicative strategies and presentation of

Table 10. Aspects of Power

	Interview	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3
Balance of power				
Culture of power	3	2	8	6
Rules are based on culture of power				
Sharing the codes	4	8	19	27
In power and least aware				

self” (p. 283). When Adriana was asked what a student would need in order to become a fluent writer, she mentioned some of these “codes.”

They would need to be exposed. And be read to. And be taken out to have more background so that when they are writing and reading that they can make connections. That they can have something to tie back to that. [pause] I think it is just more exposure to books. More exposure to writing at home. More modeling of it in the classroom, at home, anywhere they go. And also just the background, too.

These “codes” are also evident in the many occurrences in which Adriana explicitly teaches and scaffolds cognitive strategies. Another key finding is Delpit’s (1988) assertion that “being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier” (p. 283). In the following example, Adriana is teaching a lesson on playing games and is discussing the rules of the game with the students. The goal of the lesson is to publish the rules of this game and share it with other teachers. During this discussion, Adriana asks her students why they need to follow rules.

T: I’m going to publish it then give a copy to Ms. ___ and Mr. ___ so they have the direction to play.

T: Why is it important when you play games to play by the rules?

S: Because

T: I want you to think about that. What might happen if children don't follow the rules?

T: thumbs up if you thought about it

The discussion continues on what would happen if one did not follow the rules. The students come up with the consequence for not following the rules during a game.

T: Why do you need to follow the rules? I need everyone to think about this. Give me one second to get paper then pair-share.

S: Because it's not right.

S: Because it's not fair.

S: You have to.

T: This must be a FAT question because I heard a lot of different answers. A lot I agreed with. Mathew?

S: If you don't follow the rules, all the kids will tell you are not listening [sic]

T: Then the kids.

S: It won't be fun.

T: If you cheat, it won't be fun. Do you agree?

S: Yes.

T: I also agree. Another reason to follow the rules.

S: Because they won't be able to play.

T: Who?

S: The person.

T: So if you don't the rules, you won't be able to play.

While Delpit (1988) was not referring to these "rules" that one follows while playing a game specifically, she did mention rules of conduct in culture. For these students, discussing the rules of fair play for this specific game, has implications to following cultural rules and codes.

ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE TEACHERS IN URBAN SCHOOLS

The third article (Appendix J) in this section on urban schools is by Stephanie Kay Sachs (2004) and it actually invalidates an instrument often used to identify attributes of successful teachers in urban schools. Sachs found these attributes were found in both

effective and ineffective teachers in urban schools. I included this study as part of the observation framework because it sheds light on not relying on a single list of criteria for evaluating good teaching (Table 11).

Table 11. Attributes of Effective and Ineffective Teachers in Urban Schools

	Interview	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3
Sociocultural awareness		5	5	3
Strong contextual interpersonal skills	2		1	2
Enhanced self-understanding that facilitates development of a positive self-ethnic identity				
Risk-taking				
Perceived efficacy of personal influence and power over factors that contribute to student learning	2	2	7	4

Even though these attributes were found among both effective and ineffective teachers in urban schools, I used them to analyze Adriana's interview and observation data. Adriana did have sociocultural awareness in that she viewed her students' experiences and opinions as valuable to the lesson. Before the lesson on how to play games (above) Adriana brainstormed with her students on the different games they were familiar with.

T: Who wants to share something that you know about games?

S: Slide.

T: What's a slide?

S: It's something.

T: Can you show it to me?

S demonstrates a clapping game

S: Chess.

T writes this on the chart

- S: Sorry.
 T: How do you play?
 S: First you get the think like that. You pick a color. Then you get a card/
 T: Do you have a board?
 S: Then you get a color and you get it like that.
 T: What other games do you know?

Adriana shows an interest in her students' knowledge of different games and asks questions so they could explain more about them. The most interesting finding from this article was the "perceived efficacy of personal influence and power" (Sachs, 2004, p. 179). Sachs (2004) describes this as a teacher's perception of how well they can influence student learning. This perceived efficacy was evident in Adriana's interview when she was asked about her personal philosophy of teaching writing to English learners. This part of the interview was included in the Appendix B section on Jimenez and Gersten's (1999) reference to implicit challenge. At the end of her response she states:

You're here in first grade, you're going to learn. This is what you're going to learn. I have to find a way to make sure you learn this and that's it.

She takes full responsibility for her students' learning and understands her influence on them. During the observations, she is frequently interacting with students and asking them questions or asking what they need to do next. During writing workshop, Adriana constantly moved around the room and briefly met with many students. Sometimes she simply wanted to check up on them, but other times, she interacted with them just enough to help them move forward with the task.

- T: After your sketch, you can start drafting.
 T moves onto next S
 T: You have your, maybe a place you've been to.
 S: The mall.
 T: One of your choices is going to the mall.

T: So now, which one will I write about? The mall? The birthday? The field trip?
 You decide the start drafting.
 T moves onto next S

She seemed to see herself as an integral part of her students' ability to complete the task, yet she did not linger so long as to take control of the task.

DISCUSSION

The articles in this section address the attributes of teachers in urban schools, but they also address the “rules” and “codes” needed by students in order to navigate literacy and writing. The highlights from this section were sharing the codes of literacy and the perceived efficacy of teachers. Both concepts addressed the critical role of the teacher as the “tour guide” for these students as they learn to navigate the culture of power.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This section presented the results of the analysis of interview and observation data using the findings of studies from three distinctive areas of study: English learners, first grade literacy, and urban schools. The key findings from the analysis using literature on English learners revealed that this teacher, Adriana, challenged her students and had high expectations for them. She effectively scaffolded the literacy curriculum and modified the usually open-ended structure of writing workshop. She taught explicit skills and made sure to correct her students' oral and written errors as they occurred. She did not, however, demonstrate any obvious incorporation of her own or her students' culture into her instruction. She did not use their primary language as a support and rarely used sheltered English when speaking to her students who were all English learners.

The key findings from the analysis using literature on first grade literacy showed that Adriana had excellent classroom management that appeared transparent. She encouraged self-regulation among her students and often modeled how to do so by thinking aloud and demonstrating. The daily schedule was filled with a variety of reading and writing activities and each moment of the school day was utilized for meaningful instruction, resulting in instructional density. She also took advantage of students' questions and responses and seized them as teachable moments. She did not, however, to use many whole language strategies and instead, taught skills explicitly. Literature was present and available, but an instructional balance was not.

The key findings from the analysis using literature on urban schools showed that Adriana understood that literacy can be daunting for her students and she made a point to "share the code" with her students. She often used students as experts and held them up as examples for the rest of the class. She also had a strong sense of her influence and power over her students' learning. She took this responsibility very seriously and kept her students motivated by asking questions and offering support when needed. She did not, however, bring in her personal ethnic identity into the classroom, or even many local or cultural references.

The common traits shared by these key findings were combined into three themes which will be discussed in Chapter 5. The three themes are opportunities to learn, reaching the goal, and the right answer. The most significant finding, however, may be that looking to one area of study may not be adequate when searching for models of effective teaching. Many variables, or "spheres of influence," affect a teacher and students. A "sphere of influence" is a political and geographical term used to describe the economic and political

influence of neighboring countries or regions (“Sphere of influence,” n.d.). In this dissertation, it will be used to describe the cultural, linguistic, economic, and other factors that influence a teacher, students, and the school. Grade level requirements, linguistic diversity, and culture are just a few of the influences intersect to form a complete picture of teaching and learning. This study has shown that one teacher, even one considered “successful” by the experienced school site administrator, does not fit the mold of an “effective” or “exemplary” teacher found in studies of teachers within one educational context, or sphere of influence.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to compare a “successful” first grade teacher of writing to English learners in a large urban school district, with the attributes of “effective” and “exemplary” teachers found in the literature. This combination of factors—grade level, students and community—mirrored those described in the third space, a theoretical view of literacy that represents a place where curriculum intersects with language and culture conceived by Gutierrez et al. (1997). Because there are no empirical studies to validate the effectiveness of the third space, I selected studies from the literature that represented the intersecting spheres of this theoretical view of literacy: English learners, balanced literacy instruction (which primarily occurs in the first-grade), and urban schools. The interview and observation notes of this first grade teacher were analyzed using the findings from these selected studies and articles to answer this research question:

How will the attributes of a successful teacher of writing to first grade English learners compare to the attributes of “effective” and “exemplary” teachers found in previous studies of English learners, second language writing and first-grade students?

After analyzing the interview and observation notes, key findings began to emerge by the frequency and consistency in which these attributes were found in the interview and observation notes. The data analysis sheds light on the fact that each of literature selected for

this observation framework can not be distilled down to merely a “checklist” of attributes to look for. Each of the “attributes” and “characteristics” found in each of the studies represent many hours of preparation and education on the part of the classroom teacher and years of research and careful analysis on the part of the author. The fact that Adriana exhibited so many of these attributes and characteristics over a 3-day observation period represents years of professional development, personal reflection, and attention to students. If the same attributes were observed multiple times, then the quality of these attributes were also taken into consideration. How were they integrated into the lesson? Was it effective?

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

What emerged was three categories that became the three themes. These themes offer a new perspective on assessing or evaluating a teacher’s effectiveness with this specific student population: first grade English learners in urban schools.

Theme One—Opportunities to Learn: High Expectations of the Teacher and Students

Themes and trends began to emerge after the interview and observation data were analyzed using the findings from the literature on the study of teachers of English learners, first grade literacy, and urban schools. The first theme to emerge was that the teacher, Adriana, provided many opportunities for her students to learn, and that she held high expectations of her students as well as herself. This common theme came about from similar characteristics and attributes from the findings of the literature (Table 12).

Similar characteristics from each appendix were combined to form this first theme. When all these characteristics and attributes were combined, they created a larger picture of a

Table 12. Theme One—Opportunities to Learn: High Expectations of the Teacher and Students

Appendix B	Appendix C	Appendix F	Appendix G	Appendix I	Appendix J
ELL	ELL	first grade	first grade	urban	urban
Jimenez & Gersten (1999)	Vaughn et al. (2006)	Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998)	Morrow et al. (1999)	Delpit (1988)	Sachs (2004)
Challenge: Implicit or explicit	Explicit teaching	Instructional density	Teachable moment	Sharing the codes	Perceived efficacy of personal influence and power

teacher who provides many opportunities for students to learn. This teacher places a heavy emphasis on planning instruction that includes many reading and writing experiences (Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998), appropriate levels of challenge and multiple goals per lesson (Jimenez & Gersten, 1999). Every moment is planned with a meaningful learning goal, but this teacher also takes advantage of student responses and questions and turning them into unplanned teachable moments (Morrow et al., 1999). In order to create these learning opportunities, this teacher has high expectations of his students and himself. He knows the power and influence he has on his students (Sachs, 2004) and uses it to share the codes of literacy and navigating the culture of power (Delpit, 1988). This is done through explicit teaching of cognitive skills (Vaughn et al., 2006) and rules for participating in society.

Theme Two—Reaching the Goal: Scaffolding and Monitoring Students

The second theme that was revealed through the analysis was supporting students as they reached for the learning goal. This was accomplished by Adriana by scaffolding instruction and monitoring students learning. This theme came about by finding similar characteristics and attributes among the findings from the literature (Table 13).

Table 13. Theme Two—Reaching the Goal: Scaffolding and Monitoring Students

Appendix B	Appendix H	Appendix F
ELL	urban	first grade
Jimenez & Gersten (1999)	Ladson-Billings (1995)	Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998)
Scaffolding/cognitive strategies	Concepts of knowledge	Extensive use of scaffolding

When all these characteristics and attributes are combined, they create a larger picture of a teacher who scaffolds instruction by thinking aloud while modeling cognitive processes (Jimenez & Gersten, 1999) like revising or narrowing the topic of a story. This teacher understands that she must “build bridges” to facilitate learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995) by building on student questions and responses. This teacher monitors students’ learning to provide the exact amount of scaffolding necessary (Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998) and provides assistance when needed, but not so much that it interferes with the flow of the lesson.

Theme Three—The Right Answer: Errors Corrected by the Teacher and Student

The third theme that was revealed through the analysis was guiding students to get to the right answer. Adriana accomplished this by correcting her students' spoken and written errors, but also encouraging students to take responsibility for correcting their own errors. This theme came about by finding similar characteristics and attributes among the findings from the literature (Table 14).

Table 14. Theme Three—The Right Answer: Errors Corrected by the Teacher and Student

Appendix D	Appendix E	Appendix F
ELL	first grade	first grade
de la luz Reyes (1992)	Pressley et al. (2001)	Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998)
[Challenge the assumption that] error correction in process instruction hampers learning	Self-regulation encouraged	Encouragement of self-regulation

When these attributes and characteristics were combined, they form a picture of a teacher who is not concerned that correcting a student's errors will hamper the learning process. Instead, this teacher understands that students, especially linguistically and cultural diverse students, expect their teacher to correct their errors and teach them the right answer (de la luz Reyes, 1992). This teacher corrects his students' errors but also encourages his students to correct their own errors. This is accomplished by encouraging self-regulation (Pressley et al., 2001; Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998). Self-regulation is encouraged by explicitly teaching students what to do when facing difficulty (Wharton-McDonald et al.,

1998) and explicitly teaching them how to check their own work (Pressley et al., 2001). This teacher models self-regulation strategies (Pressley et al., 2001) and asking questions on how they arrived at an answer (Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998).

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

The three themes were formed by combining similar attributes that were found in the interview and observation data from the findings from the literature spanning three areas of research. The three areas of research mirrored the intersecting spheres of the third space. The three themes provide a different, multi-dimensional approach to evaluating and assessing “effective” and “exemplary” teaching because they span the areas of influence of this particular teacher. The sole participant of this dissertation taught first grade to English learners in a large urban school district. She was nominated for this study by the school site administrator, as being successful at teaching writing to English learners. The school site administrator had also been a teacher and a reading specialist at this same school, providing her with the experience and qualifications to make this recommendation. By comparing her teaching and philosophies with those of other “effective” or “exemplary” teachers from the literature, I was able to gain a clearer picture of what made her part of that esteemed club. In a sense, I was able to duplicate the studies of Jimenez and Gersten (1999), Vaughn et al. (2006), Pressley et al (2001), Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998); and Morrow et al. (1999) and create a construct for observations, or a checklist, of what constitutes an effective teacher in this specific environment where three spheres of influence intersect.

IMPLICATIONS

No one teacher exists in a vacuum within a single sphere of influence. Teachers and their students exist within multiple spheres of influence which may include grade level, community, cultural and linguistic background, just to name a few. Some teachers and students may exist within other spheres such as environmental impact, where pollution from nearby factories or freeways threatens harm. Others may interact with the relatively new phenomenon of “helicopter parents.” Whatever the spheres of influence, it may benefit both the teacher and students to take these into account when researching ways to improve teaching practice. It may not be enough to look at one dimension that affects student learning, or one sphere of influence that affects teaching. Instead, much like the theory of the third space, a hybrid of curriculum intersecting with culture, we may need to look at the multiple dimensions of teaching and learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The finding from this study is that a multi-dimensional approach to investigating teacher effectiveness may be helpful to several groups in education. Teachers, teacher educators, and administrators could benefit from considering more than one dimension when the goal is professional development, preparation, or evaluation. Factors such as grade level, students’ proficiency with English, and culture may affect the instruction because the teacher has to scaffold, modify, and mediate.

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers often look to the literature for ways to improve their teaching practice. A recommendation for teachers is to look beyond a specific skill or strategy, and consider the

whole picture. Take into consideration all the factors that influence the students in the classroom and seek “evidence” from multiple areas of study. The literature from multiple areas of study may sometimes provide conflicting information, but there are often shared common attributes and characteristics, when combined.

Recommendations for Teacher Educators

Teacher educators are responsible for preparing pre-service teachers to meet the demands of the students, school, and community. Teacher educators may be able to offer pre-service teachers and student teachers a clearer picture of effective and exemplary teaching practices by peering through multiple windows. Instead of focusing on a specific skill or strategy, the teacher educator might encourage pre-service teachers to identify the spheres of influence that affect their master teacher and student population. Then, as they lead these pre-service teachers into student teaching, show them how to find resources that are tailored to meet their specific areas of need. Teacher educators may select from multiple areas of study when selecting course readings to provide students with variety of literature and background.

Recommendations for Administrators

Administrators are responsible for hiring teachers and assessing their effectiveness. Administrators may be able to have a clearer picture of a teacher’s instructional effectiveness by relying on a comprehensive observation framework that includes several of the variables that affect that teacher and classroom. Administrators may also use this comprehensive, multi-dimensional observation framework as a basis for specialized professional development for the school faculty.

RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

I was a classroom teacher for 8 years, 2 of those years in first grade and 2 years as a Reading Recovery teacher. I also served as a teacher educator for the last 10 years and guided, instructed, and supervised student teachers in multiple school districts, cities, and counties. I hold both the Crosscultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) and Bilingual Cross Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) credentials which certify me to teach both English immersion and bilingual education classes in Spanish. Based on my experience, education, and background, I would evaluate Adriana's teaching and approach to teaching as "well above average" and "exemplary." She exhibited a passion for her students and strived to fill every moment of the school day with meaning. Even spare moments like dismissing students to recess turned into a skills-based activity. She had excellent classroom management and I never recalled any type of disruption or incident. This may be due to the fact that she looped with class and had most of the students the year before in kindergarten, so they were all fully aware of her classroom expectations. It was obvious to me why her school site administrator had nominated her for this study.

Upon embarking on this study, I used the theory of the third space to frame my search for appropriate literature. I found studies on effective teachers of English learners, first grade literacy, and urban schools. Before beginning the analysis, I fully anticipated that Adriana would fulfill all the criteria set forth by these studies of "effective" and "exemplary" teachers. I assumed she would at least match the characteristics and attributes that are commonly associated with teaching English learners, first grade literacy and in urban schools. The literature I selected on English learners included Jimenez and Gersten (1999), Vaughn et al. (2006), and de la luz Reyes (1992). Common themes among these three articles included

emphasis on using sheltered English and using the students' primary language to support instruction. I was surprised that these were rarely observed in Adriana's teaching. The literature on first grade literacy included Pressley et al. (2001), Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998), and Morrow et al. (1999). A common attribute among these studies was the concept of balanced literacy instruction that included elements of whole language. Again, I was surprised at how rarely these were observed in her classroom. The literature on urban schools included Ladson-Billings (1995), Delpit (1988), and Sachs (2004). A common attribute among these studies was a connection between the teacher and the community. While I did not observe that Adriana had an absence of connection to the community, she did not exhibit any obvious link to the community outside school.

These surprises brought about many questions. Why did this teacher, considered effective within these three intersecting spheres, not match all the attributes and characteristics from the literature? Why is she still considered "successful" if she doesn't demonstrate the most commonly associated trait within each area of study? When combining the studies to form the three themes, I came upon a possible conclusion: much like a child's learning experience is mediated by his interaction and exposure to experts, cultural tools, and artifacts (Vygotsky, 1986), a teacher's instruction may also be mediated by interaction and exposure to the multiple factors that affect her, her students, the classroom, school, and community.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

While conducting this research, this study revealed many limitations. First of all, the small sample size of one teacher makes it difficult to generalize the findings. A suggestion

for further research would be to analyze several teachers from different schools, but who share common variables affecting the classroom experience. By having a larger sample size, a researcher would be able to offer more widely generalizable theories. The recommendation for researchers would be to select multiple teachers to determine if they share the same characteristics, or like in Pressley et al.'s (2001) study, compare the most effective with the least effective teachers.

A second limitation was the single interview. The single interview took place after the 3-day observation period. While the interview offered valuable insight into the teacher's personal philosophy and goals, it was limited in that there was little opportunity to respond to specific incidents that took place during instruction. Perhaps an interview about the teacher's philosophy should be separate from an interview where she is asked to justify and explain specific instructional decisions and activities; which could shed more light into the motivations of the teacher. A suggestion for future researchers would be to prepare questions based on these instructional decisions and interview the teacher at more regular intervals.

A third limitation was that the interview and observations were completed before the analysis with the lens of teaching writing to English learners. Because of this lens, every writing activity was recorded and analyzed, meaning many math, music, art, and physical education lessons were not included in the analysis. Fortunately, this teacher believed in incorporating writing during science, math, and social studies, so many of those lessons were observed and analyzed. A suggestion to future researchers may be to have a broader lens when selecting what activities to include or being very selective and only looking at one specific subject or activity over a longer period of time.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This research study compares a firstgrade teacher, nominated for this study for her success at teaching writing to English learners, with the attributes of effective and exemplary teaching characteristics of teachers of English learners, first grade literacy, and urban schools. This study was inspired by the third space, a theoretical view of literacy developed by Gutierrez et al. (1997) which is the blending of language and literacy with sociocultural influences. Literature from three areas of study that closely match the third space were used to analyze the interview and observation data of this first grade teacher. The findings from these studies on “effective” and “exemplary” teachers were used to analyze the study participant’s interview and observation data. The number of times an attribute or characteristic was observed was recorded those that occurred with the greatest frequency were counted as key findings.

The key findings from this study produced three themes that came about by the frequency in which they were observed in our first grade teacher then by combining shared attributes from the literature to reveal three broader themes of effective teaching characteristics: Theme 1—Opportunities to learn: High expectations of the teacher and students; Theme 2— Reaching the goal: Scaffolding and monitoring students; and Theme 3—The right answer: Errors corrected by the teacher and student. The analysis also revealed a fourth significant finding. It revealed that every teacher is influenced by multiple factors ranging from grade level to linguistic diversity in the classroom. It may not be adequate to evaluate or assess this teacher using a one-dimensional approach. Instead, more information and data may be revealed if teachers are assessed using multiple observation frameworks from the areas of study that affect that classroom. Every classroom exists with

multiple spheres of influence and it is incumbent on the teacher to identify these spheres, and seek the literature in those areas in order to develop professionally. Teacher educators may also better prepare pre-service teachers by guiding them to identify the factors that affect the classroom, and seek literature in those areas on effective teaching. Much like the theory of the third space, which inspired this study, teachers may benefit from investigating the multiple spheres of influence that affect their teaching, their students and their classroom.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

1. Review your teaching background for me.
2. What have been your professional development experiences?
3. What has been the most useful experience for learning to teach writing?
 - a. What has been the most useful in learning to teach English learners?
4. Think of 2 students in your class:
 - a. one with a high ELD/low ELD
 - b. What is your approach to teaching writing for the student with the high ELD? Low ELD?
5. If time and money were no object, what would (low ELD) need to become a fluent reader and writer in English?
 - a. What does “fluent writer” mean to you?
 - b. How did you come to that conclusion?
6. What are ways you scaffold Open Court Reading for English learners?
7. You’ve shared a lot of yourself with your students. What is the reasoning behind that?
8. How did you decide to teach that lesson during your writing time?
9. Share your personal philosophy of teaching English learners.

APPENDIX B

CONSTRUCT FOR OBSERVATIONS

Construct for Observations (Jimenez & Gersten, 1999)

1. Challenge

Implicit (cognitive challenge, use of higher order questions)

Explicit (high but reasonable expectations)

2. Involvement

Amount of active involvement

Involvement of all students including low-performing students

3. Success

a. Providing activities and tasks that students can complete

b. Indicating to students when they are successful

c. Assigning activities that are reasonable, avoiding undue frustration

4. Scaffolding/Cognitive strategies

a. Teacher provides support to students by “thinking aloud,” building on and clarifying input of students

b. Teacher attempts to use visual organizers/story maps or other aids to help students organize and relate information

c. Teacher provides adequate background knowledge to students and/or informally assesses whether students have background knowledge

5. Mediation/feedback

a. Frequency

b. Comprehensibility

c. Extent to which teacher provides students with strategies

d. Questions that press students to clarify or expand on initial statements

- e. Use of praise/criticism
- 6. Monitoring/Awareness of student progress and learning
 - a. Generator of meaningful tasks
 - b. Coherence across parts of lessons
 - c. Students aware of teacher expectations
- 7. Cooperative learning and beyond
 - a. All students participate
 - b. Creating a community of learners
 - c. Accessing knowledge/recognition that all students have something to contribute
 - d. Purpose of cooperative activity clear to students
- 8. Techniques for second language acquisition/sheltered English
 - a. Extent to which extended discourse is fostered
 - b. Use of consistent language
 - c. Sensitivity to common problems
 - d. Meaningful incorporation of students' primary language
- 9. Incorporating cultural diversity into instruction
 - a. The extent to which teacher shows respect for students as individuals and respect for culture and family, and possesses knowledge of cultural diversity
 - b. View of diversity as an asset, rejection of cultural deficit notions

APPENDIX C

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Intervention Strategies (Vaughn et al., 2006)

- a. Explicit teaching
- b. Promotion of English language learning
- c. Phonemic awareness and decoding
- d. Vocabulary development
- e. Interactive teaching that maximizes student engagement
- f. Instruction that produces opportunities for accurate responses with feedback for struggling learners.

APPENDIX D

CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT

TEACHING ENGLISH LEARNERS

**Challenging Assumptions About Teaching English Learners
(de la luz Reyes, 1992)**

Maria de la Luz Reyes challenges some of the assumptions made about linguistically diverse students based on current research. She claims that these assumptions are often treated as “too sacred to challenge.” These assumptions are:

1. English is the only legitimate medium for learning and instruction.
2. Linguistic minorities must be immersed in English as quickly as possible if they are to succeed in school.
3. A “one size fits all” approach is good for students. In this case, she is referring to literacy approaches that are “translated” and used with English learners without modifications such as whole language and the writing process.
4. Error correction in process instruction hampers learning.

APPENDIX E

IDENTIFYING THE COMPONENTS OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE TEACHERS' TEACHING

**Identifying the Components of the Most Effective
Teachers' Teaching (Pressley et al., 2001)**

- Excellent classroom management
- Positive, reinforcing, cooperative environment
- Balancing of skills instruction and whole language: teaching of skills, literature emphasis, and much reading and writing
- Match of accelerating demands to student competence, with a great deal of scaffolding.
- Self-regulation encouraged
- Strong connections across the curriculum

APPENDIX F

CHARACTERISTICS DISTINGUISHING

HIGH-ACHIEVEMENT TEACHERS

Characteristics Distinguishing High-Achievement Teachers
(Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998)

- Instructional balance
- Instructional density
- Extensive use of scaffolding
- Encouragement of self-regulation
- Thorough integration of reading and writing activities
- High expectations for all students
- Masterful classroom management
- Awareness of purpose

APPENDIX G

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXEMPLARY FIRST GRADE LITERACY INSTRUCTION

**Characteristics of Exemplary First Grade Literacy
Instruction (Morrow et al., 1999)**

- literacy rich environments
- many types of reading experiences
- daily writing in different forms
- planned and spontaneous skill development (explicit)
- teachable moments
- content area literacy
- effective classroom management
- good planning
- based their classroom on their philosophies, were consciously aware of their philosophies and could articulate them

APPENDIX H

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995)

Culturally relevant pedagogy: a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate. (p. 469)

The conceptions of self and others held by culturally relevant teachers

- Believed that all students were capable of academic success
- Saw their pedagogy as art – unpredictable, always in the process of becoming
- Saw themselves as members of the community
- Saw teaching as a way to give back to the community
- Believed in a Freirean notion of “teaching as mining” (1974, p. 76). Or pulling knowledge out

The manner in which social relations are structured by culturally relevant teachers

- Maintain fluid student-teacher relationships
- Demonstrate a connectedness with all of the students
- Develop a community of learners
- Encourage students to learn collaboratively and be responsible for another

The conceptions of knowledge held by culturally relevant teachers

- Knowledge is not static; it is shared, recycled, and constructed
- Knowledge must be viewed critically
- Teachers must be passionate about knowledge and learning

- Teachers must scaffold, or build bridges, to facilitate learning
- Assessment must be multifaceted, incorporating multiple forms of excellence

APPENDIX I

FIVE ASPECTS OF POWER, “CULTURE OF POWER”

**Five Aspects of Power, “Culture of Power”
(Delpit, 1988)**

1. Balance of Power - Issues of power are enacted in classrooms
2. There are codes or rules for participating in power: that is, there is a culture of power
3. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power
4. If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier
5. Those with power are frequently least aware of – or least willing to acknowledge – its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence.

APPENDIX J

ATTRIBUTES OF URBAN TEACHERS

Attributes of Urban Teachers (Sachs, 2004)

- Sociocultural awareness,
- Strong contextual interpersonal skills
- Enhanced self-understanding that facilitates development of a positive self-ethnic identity
- Risk-taking
- Perceived efficacy of personal influence and power over factors that contribute to student learning